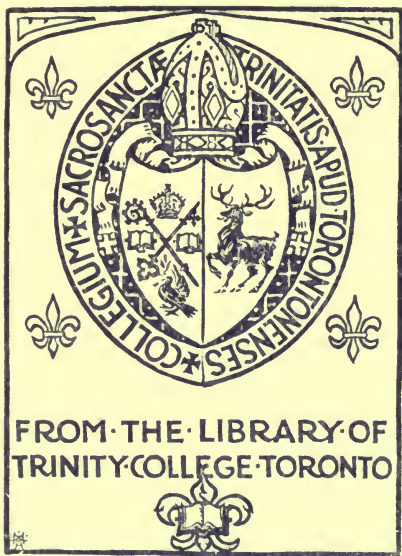


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TREATISE

&c.

VOL. II.

ON THE WISDOM AND GOODNESS OF
THE CREATOR.

Permites ipsis expendere Numinibus, quid
Conveniat nobis, rebusque sit utile nostris ;
Carior est illis homo, quàm sibi.

Juv.

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A
TREATISE
ON THE
RECORDS OF THE CREATION,
AND ON THE
MORAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE CREATOR;
WITH
PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE JEWISH HISTORY,
AND
TO THE CONSISTENCY OF THE PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION WITH
THE WISDOM AND GOODNESS OF THE DEITY.

BY JOHN BIRD SUMNER, D.D.
LORD BISHOP OF CHESTER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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CONTENTS
OF
THE SECOND VOLUME.

PART II.

ON THE WISDOM OF THE CREATOR.

Introduction. Statement of the Attributes. Modes of proving them à priori, and from the Works of the Creation. (Page 1.)

CHAP. I.

On the Wisdom of the Creator, (Page 6.)

Instances from the few Principles employed to execute his Purposes in the natural World. Attraction, Gasses, Rarefaction, Condensation, &c.

Probability that similar Laws extend to the human Race.

CHAP. II.

On the Design of the Creator as to Man's Existence upon Earth. (Page 16.)

That he might exercise his Faculties and Virtues. Proof,

from the improvable Reason which distinguishes Mankind from all other Animals. Remarks on the Fallacy of the *Scale of Existence*. Faculty of improvement useless, without a Situation fit to call it forth.

Purpose of this improvement, a higher State of Existence.

Proofs from Reason and Revelation.

Statement of the proposed Argument.

CHAP. III.

Whether Equality or Inequality of Ranks and Fortunes is the situation best suited to the Developement and Improvement of the human Faculties. (Page 31.)

Proofs in favour of Inequality: from the low State of Society wherever Equality exists. North and South Americans. Reason of this analyzed. Effects of Example, and Emulation, arising from Division of Property. Instances from Pelew Islanders. Progress of Civilization. Superiority of civilized Life.

Contrary Opinion of Godwin considered. Desire of bettering the individual Condition, shown to be the only Spur of Industry. Case of Sparta considered, and of Peru. Use of Slaves in those Communities. Conclusion in favour of unequal Fortunes, Ranks, and Conditions.

CHAP. IV.

Whether Equality or Inequality of Ranks and Fortunes is the Condition best suited to the Exercise of Virtue. (Page 85.)

Effect of a Community of Goods upon the Opportunities of Virtue. Nature of Virtue examined. Rewardable Virtue supposes Difficulty. Opportunities to practical Virtue

in civil Society. Duties of the Rich; of the middle Ranks; of the Poor. Difference between Poverty and Indigence. Case of Peruvian Society supposed. Low State to which it would reduce Mankind. Conclusion in favour of various Conditions.

CHAP. V.

On the Principle of Population, and its Effects: intended to show that Man is inevitably placed in that Condition which is most calculated to improve his Faculties, and afford Opportunities for the Exercise of Virtue. (Page 113.)

Statement of the Principle under every Condition of Society. Its Effect universal, in bringing the Population up to the Supply of Food. First Result of the Principle, the Division of Property. Mode of Operation exemplified, in the Case of a Single Family, for whose increase the allotted District is too small. This the date of the Recognition of Property among the existing Families.

II. This Division of Property is followed by the Division of Ranks through the Effect of casual Misfortunes, and moral Habits, causing Property, at first equal, to run into large Masses. Vain Attempts in the ancient Republics to obviate this Tendency. Inequality becomes more striking in the Progress of Civilization.

These Effects dependent upon the relative Ratio of the Increase of Population, and of human Sustenance. Their Consequence, individual Exertion.

Law of Increase, a Law of Design.

Wisdom of the Ordinance.

CHAP. VI.

On the collateral Effects of the Principle of Population. (Page 157.)

Objections against the Dispensation.

Evil accompanying it, belongs to an imperfect State.

Its collateral Advantages. I. Universal Industry. A stimulus to exertion necessary to Mankind. Proofs from Experience. A Compensation is made in the Advantages derived from the Division of Labour.

II. Second collateral Benefit, the Communication of Arts and natural Productions. Case of mere Reproduction supposed; its Consequences. Advantage of Migrations. Instances, from Countries with and without Communication: also from a View of the present state of the World; Asiatic Russia; Southern Asia: Africa; America. Diffusion of Christianity.

Adaptation of the Principle of Population to peculiar Circumstances of every Society. Its Operation not severe or coercive.

Recapitulation of the Argument. Concluding Remarks.

P A R T III.

CHAP. I.

On the Goodness of the Creator. (Page 205.)

Proofs of a benevolent Design in the Creator, from the Constitution of Mankind.

Argument à priori.

Sceptical Objections from the Appearance of the World.

Proofs of benevolent Intention from the Gratifications attached to our Nature, both bodily, and secondly, intellectual; sufficient to fix the *Onus probandi* on the other Side.

Objections from the Existence of Evil.

CHAP. II.

The present Existence of Mankind considered as a State of moral Trial. (Page 223.)

General Determination in favour of Virtue.

Statement of the Question. That Mankind are not placed in the best conceivable State, conceded; but in a State of Probation.

Probable Reasons of such a Dispensation.

Trial necessary to future Reward. Instance in the Call of Abraham, &c.

Difference of tried and untried Virtue.

Degree of Evil not greater than was necessary to the Purpose of Discipline. Analogy from the Persecutions of the early Christians.

Justice of placing Mankind in this State of moral Trial, argued.

CHAP. III.

On the Goodness of God displayed in the Christian Dispensation. (Page 261.)

The Sacrifice of Christ, a Scheme to obviate the fatal Effects of Sin.

The Influence of Grace, to counteract the moral Weakness consequent upon the Fall.

General Plan of Justice and Goodness disclosed in the Gospel.
Outline of that Plan, according to Scripture.

The Nature of the Atonement, and the Cause of our being
placed in a probationary State, above our Reason, but
not contrary to it; and analogous to other of the divine
Plans.

Concluding View of the Effect of moral Evil.

CHAP. IV.

On natural Evils, and those of civil Life. (Page 285.)

Different View they present to different Minds.

Natural Evils explained by a probationary State.

Death—its moral Effects.

Disease—its moral Effects.

Evils of civil Life. Their Extent.

Affluence not necessary to Happiness.

Force of Habit. Intelligence not wanting to the lower
Classes, in a Christian Country.

Superfluities only rendered necessary by Power of Custom.

Essentials of Happiness, Occupation and Health.

Conclusion.

CHAP. V.

*On the Capabilities of Improvement in a State of ad-
vanced Civilization.* (Page 328.)

State of Society in Great Britain. Question, whether it
admits of Melioration.

Ignorance of the Poor, not a necessary Evil.

Indigence, its Alleviations and Preventives.

Parochial Banks for small Savings, recommended.

Practicability of these Improvements.
 Detailed in the Case of a Parish of a thousand Souls.
 Power of the lower Classes to save if Facility were given.
 Its Advantages shown by Calculations.
 Result of the Whole, in favour of the divine Goodness.

CHAP. VI.

On the Evils of an uncivilized State. (Page 368.)

General Remarks.
 Situation and Number of the hunting Tribes considered.
 Pastoral Nations considered.
 Agriculture naturally tends to Civilization.
 Compensations of uncivilized Life, among the hunting and
 pastoral Tribes.
 ————— in the equinoctial Regions.
 Actual Extent of the Evil ; and Provisions for its Remedy,
 in Commerce and Colonization.
 No Situations inconsistent with a State of Probation.

 CONCLUSION. (Page 417.)

Recapitulation.
 Practical Consequences.
 Objection from want of visible Interposition answered, first,
 from the Nature of Virtue ; and secondly, of Faith, as
 essential to moral Trial.
 Conclusion, as to the Duty incumbent on Mankind from
 the Suggestions of natural Religion, confirmed by Reve-
 lation.



A

TREATISE,

§c.

PART II.

ON THE WISDOM OF THE CREATOR.

INTRODUCTION.

THE argument, as far as it has hitherto advanced, has assured us of the being of one self-existent, eternal, intelligent Creator.

We proceed farther, and affirm that the Creator is endued with infinite power, wisdom, and goodness.

These attributes are strictly deducible from those that have been already argued. It is too

evident to be denied, that no controul can by any possibility be exercised over the will or designs of that Being, who is himself the first and sole cause of whatever exists. The self-existent Creator, therefore, must of necessity, that is as being self-existent and the cause of all other existences, be possessed of infinite power.

Again, the Creator, as being the author of all things, must possess a complete and actual acquaintance not only with the things that exist, or have existed, at any definite point of time, but with whatever can possibly arise as consequences from things so existing, or be contingent upon them. Neither can He, on whose original will it depended that certain powers should contribute to produce certain effects, be possibly ignorant of the means which best conduce to any design, or of the end which may result from any particular means. And this perfect knowledge of all that is past and all that is present, and all that is dependent upon the past and present, is omniscience, or infinite wisdom.

The goodness of the Creator is deducible from similar inferences. For goodness, truth, and justice, consisting in the observance of the mutual rights and relations of persons, can only be impeded either by ignorance of the different bearings and dependencies of actions, or by some frailty and imperfection inducing the violation of those bearings and dependencies, when known and perceived. But the relations of all existing beings, and of every possible action, are always and at once present to the view of infinite Wisdom. And a Being possessed of omnipotence can be swayed by none of the weaknesses or frailties which assail imperfect natures, to a violation of the eternal rules of truth and equity.

But these arguments from necessity, though demonstrably irrefragable, produce a very weak and transient effect upon the mind in comparison with those proofs which are derived from the several parts of the creation and the visible arrangement of the universe. These being always before our view and within the reach of our observation, contribute to give a strength and

permanency to our impression of the attributes, proportioned to the frequent occasions by which it is confirmed. The occasions indeed are limited only by the extent of our observations upon the animate and inanimate, the rational and irrational creation. From a subject so inexhaustible, and widening daily with the increase of knowledge and research, every individual must select the proof which strikes his own mind most forcibly.

With respect to the power, indeed, of the Creator, there is little room for such selection. The minutest created object displays power as inconceivable to our capacities as the creation of a system. The wonders which astronomy unfolds to our contemplation, of world beyond world, extending into immeasurable space, and filling our imagination with the idea of numerous ranks of beings, the probable inhabitants of those worlds, are often set before us as calculated to raise the sublimest apprehensions of the power of the Creator. But I conceive that the fact of the creation being once proved, the

power of the Creator is proved along with it'; and that no person ever granted the one, and denied the other.

Passing over therefore the attribute of power, as implied in the act of creation, I shall bestow my principal attention on the wisdom and goodness of the Deity; and the more willingly, because many who have given their assent to the power displayed in the creation, have refused it to the moral attribute of goodness, altogether; and have alleged many insulated appearances which are supposed to be inconsistent with infinite wisdom.

CHAPTER I.

On the Wisdom of the Creator.

WHEN we desire to form an estimate of any extraordinary degree of power, or knowledge, or wisdom, we are led by a habit almost instinctive to compare the object proposed to us with our own powers, under similar circumstances, and to judge of its extent by the degree of difference resulting from such a comparison. The same principle must be pursued, in order to communicate to our limited faculties any idea of the wisdom of the Creator. The utmost elevation which the human mind can attain stops infinitely short of the absolute omniscience of the Deity. The only notion we can form upon the subject is relative ; by taking the highest aim and object of human

wisdom as a basis, and with this in view, contemplating the vast provisions and simple execution, which the general laws that regulate the natural and moral world unfold to our observation.

I shall attempt to illustrate this view of the subject by a few particular instances ; which will prove, if just, that both in the constitution of the universe, and in the laws which respect peculiarly the human race, the Deity has shown the most comprehensive and prospective wisdom.

Confessedly, the highest aim of philosophical theory is to account for the phænomena it treats of by the fewest possible principles ; and the great ambition of human art, practically exerted, is to attain the end proposed by the least complicated means. To contrive that the same machinery should execute various purposes, and contribute by one operation to the different exigencies of the manufacture, is the summit of our ingenuity, the

result of a length of time, numerous trials, and numerous disappointments. According to this test then, which our own efforts confess to be the highest, I proceed to examine the wisdom of the Creator.

We are sufficiently acquainted with the mechanism of the natural world, to form some notion of the universality of the laws which accomplish the most immense purposes. With respect to the system at large of which our globe constitutes a comparatively inconsiderable part, one principle of gravitation preserves the planets in their orbits, and determines the descent of the most trifling body to the ground. In proportion as researches into the planetary system have penetrated deeper, which have now ended in the complete development of the Newtonian theory; in that proportion has the provision been more and more clearly unfolded, that by an obedience originally prescribed to this single and universal law, not only the motions of the different bodies composing the system are regulated, but their

aberrations and eccentricities are adjusted and corrected, and the permanence of the system itself is maintained, equally free from variation, and from the necessity of interference to prevent variation.

Still farther, not only does one and the same body give support and stability to the system, but furnishes it with the essential requisites of light and heat.

In descending from the contemplation of the whole system to the examination of the globe to which we ourselves belong, we are attended by the same comprehensive wisdom. The air of our atmosphere, which is necessary to the existence of the animal and vegetable world, is composed of two elastic fluids, united in a definite and exact proportion; a proportion so precisely suited to those for whose respiration it was intended, that any difference in the quantity of either ingredient would prove, according to its degree, injurious or destructive. The same air which supplies life and

health to the human race, is equally and alone salubrious to every other animal. It might be expected that the portion of this air which animals return in the alternate motion of the lungs, having performed its service, would prove of no farther utility: but it has been otherwise contrived. This part of the atmosphere, though insalubrious to man, affords the most grateful nourishment to the plants by which he is surrounded; according to which provision nothing is lost, and the constant purity of the air we breathe is preserved.

The same air which in its compound state supports the life of the animal creation, administers also to the comfort and necessities of man in the shape of fire.* Combustion is the decomposition of the atmosphere, a process which, under certain circumstances of temperature, most of the products of the earth have

* Though the phlogistic theory still retains some advocates, and the one here alluded to is not without its difficulties, I conceive that its general reception warrants the use I make of it, in a view so rapid and cursory as the present.

in a greater or less degree the power of affecting; and which is regularly accompanied by the disengagement of the light and heat for which we have such frequent occasion, when the assistance of the solar rays is either wanting, or inapplicable. The same elastic fluids which perform these important purposes, in another state of composition become the chief constituents of water also. And the result is, that the principal wants of the animal and vegetable world are supplied by three elastic fluids, the peculiar union of which furnishes us with water, fire and vital air. Neither do these fluids require the interposition of the Creator to supply their constant expenditure. The original mandate of eternal Wisdom provided, as far as we can learn from physical researches, for a world of which we cannot foresee the termination. The simple gasses, disengaged by various natural processes, from the combustibles, vegetables, and different substances which absorb them, are so contrived as to form a natural re-union, and preserve a constant equilibrium.

The same principle of economy and of universality in the means employed to produce the most important results, might be exemplified throughout the whole constitution of our globe. It is no light provison, for instance, that the fertility of the earth is incapable of the decay which the perpetual production of plants might be expected to cause : an effect which is guarded against by the single law, that the destruction of one race of vegetables affords aliment to a fresh succession. By a contrivance equally prospective, the same principle of rarefaction and condensation which purifies the atmosphere, and regulates the temperature of the seasons, raises water in the form of vapour to the clouds, and returns it to the earth as rain, thus diffusing a fertility universally, which would otherwise have been confined to the banks of rivers : and it results from these united operations, that the moisture once given at the creation preserves its own equilibrium, without increase, or diminution, or reproduction. It is a part of the same contrivance to furnish the means of communication, and sometimes even of regular communica-

tion, between countries the most widely separated from each other.

I contend, therefore, that the slightest outline of the constitution of the natural world conveys a proof of the most comprehensive wisdom : which having determined upon the existence of a habitable system, like ours, according to a certain plan, obtained the purposes required by the simplest conceivable means : and arranged originally the various parts in a regular and dependent order, which should neither be subject to accident, nor require interposition. Indeed, there is sound reason to believe that the argument here touched upon may hereafter be carried to an extent, not only far beyond that to which I have limited it, but beyond that which is compatible with the present state of our knowledge. Every year's experience in natural philosophy diminishes the number of those bodies which are necessarily considered as simple, because they have never been hitherto decomposed, and of course diminishes at the same time the original principles employed in

the constitution of the universe. The argument is progressive ; it is not merely co-extensive with our knowledge, but extending with it. The opinion is not only justifiable, but philosophical, that, notwithstanding the comprehensive provisions with which we are already familiar, we are not yet acquainted with half the economy really employed in the structure of the world. And yet, from the result of our present inquiries, it appears, that “ a few undecompounded bodies, which may perhaps ultimately be resolved into still fewer elements, or which may be different forms of the same material, constitute the whole of our tangible universe of things.”*

It might be expected, however, that not the inanimate world alone, but those for whose reception it was fitted, and to whose use it is adapted, should be subject to their Creator's regulation, and conform to laws of the same general and comprehensive nature. This regu-

* Davy's Elem. of Chem. Phil. p. 503.

lation, indeed, which the right government of the universe appears to require, the free agency of man seems to forbid, and to be inconsistent, both in reason and experience, with the interference which would be necessary to reduce mankind to an uniform course of action. I think it will nevertheless appear, that there are laws equally universal in their operation, if not equally obvious with those already alluded to, which confine within certain bounds even the animate creation, and are not transgressed by the free agency of man himself. A stronger evidence of omniscient wisdom will hardly be demanded, than such a provision would afford : I shall therefore, with less hesitation, endeavour to illustrate it, though the nature of the subject will carry me into a somewhat prolix discussion.

CHAPTER II.

*On the Design of the Creator in regard to the
Existence of Mankind upon Earth.*

BEFORE we can decide upon the wisdom of the Creator's provisions respecting man, we must necessarily consider his design in bringing him into existence ; which appears to be, that he might exercise, according to his opportunities in his progress through the world, the various powers of reason and virtue with which he is endowed.

The proof which reason furnishes of this design, without appealing to higher sources of information, is this, that unless the Creator did propose such an object to the existence of mankind upon earth, he has bestowed upon

them needless and superfluous faculties, both moral and intellectual. But to imagine this with regard to man, would be to acquiesce in a belief with respect to the most exalted inhabitant of the earth, which is contradicted by all our researches into the inferior orders of the creation, and diametrically opposite to the general analogy of nature.

If we look to the inanimate world, there is scarcely a part of which we cannot distinguish the object, either general or particular, subservient to the various wants of living beings.

Among all the properties of things, we discover no inutility, no superfluity. Voluntary motion is denied to the vegetable creation, because mechanical motion answers the purpose ; which raises, in some plants, a defence against the wind, which expands others towards the sun, inclines them to the support they require, and diffuses their seed. If we ascend higher towards irrational animals, we find them possessed of powers exactly suited to the rank

they hold in the scale of existence. The oyster is fixed to his rock, the herring traverses a vast extent of ocean. But the powers of the oyster are not deficient ; he opens his shell for nourishment, and closes it at the approach of an enemy : nor are those of the herring superfluous ; he secures and supports himself in the frozen seas, and commits his spawn in the summer to the more genial influence of warmer climates. The strength and ferocity of beasts of prey are required by the mode of subsistence allotted to them : if the ant has peculiar sagacity, it is but a compensation for its weakness ; if the bee is remarkable for its foresight, that foresight is rendered necessary by the short duration of its harvest. Nothing can be more various than the powers allowed to animals, each in their order ; yet it will be found, that all these powers, which make the study of nature so endless and so interesting, suffice to their necessities, and no more.

But man alone, if he is born for no other purpose than to cultivate the earth, and con-

tinue his species, has been endued with a faculty, and this the noblest we are acquainted with, for no assignable end. This faculty is improvable reason ; and is of a much loftier and more exalted nature than is necessary to his mere existence or preservation. Ask the inhabitant of Lapland or Paraguay, what is requisite to the existence of man ; and a very low standard of intellectual endowment will be returned. The lowest ranks of savages, whose reason, how improvable soever, has scarcely been raised by exercise beyond the natural instinct of the bee, can continue their unfortunate race, and provide against the rigours of cold and hunger, as effectually as the happier children of civilization. All the superiority, therefore, of the philosopher above the Hottentot, might have been lost, if the situation had been wanting which led the way to his improvement ; and all the power of mind which lies dormant in the savage, and is awakened to full activity in the European, would be a superfluous waste of talent, if it did not contribute to the general design, and co-operate with some farther plan of the Creator.

There are writers, it is true, who have taken an extraordinary pleasure in levelling the broad distinction which separates man from the brute creation.* Misled to a false conclusion by the infinite variety of nature's productions, they have described a chain of existence connecting the vegetable with the animal world, and the different orders of animals one with another, so as to rise by an almost imperceptible gradation from the tribe of simiæ, to the lowest of

* M. Bonnet observes, that if we survey the principal productions of nature, we shall perceive that betwixt those of a different class, and even those of a different species, there will always be found some which will apparently link the classes or species together. He has given a scale of beings on the principle of gradation; the first link of which connects man with quadrupeds, by means of the orang-outang and monkey. The idea is enlarged upon by Mr. White, in a treatise, entitled, "An Account of the regular Gradations in Man, &c."—"This rash hypothesis, 'that the Negro is the connecting link between the white man and the ape,' took its rise from the arbitrary classification of Linnæus, which associates man and the ape in the same order. The more natural arrangement of later systems separates them into the bimanous and quadrumanous orders. If this classification had not been followed, it would not have occurred to the most fanciful mind to find in the Negro an intermediate link."—Pritchard on Man, p. 67.

the human race, and from these upwards to the most refined. But if a comparison were to be drawn, it should be taken, not from the upright form, which is by no means confined to mankind; nor even from the vague term reason, which cannot always be accurately separated from instinct; but from that power of progressive and improvable reason, which is man's peculiar and exclusive endowment. It has been sometimes alleged, and may be founded on fact, that there is less difference between the highest brute animal and the lowest savage, than between the savage and the most improved man. But in order to warrant the pretended analogy, it ought to be also true that this lowest savage is no more capable of improvement than the chimpanzee or orang-outang. Among brute animals of the same species, there are no degrees of improvement. The wolf of North America, as far at least as its natural powers are concerned, resembles the wolf of the Alps; the elephant of Africa may be mistaken for that of India. Animals, in short, are born, with no material exception, what they are intended to

remain, and bring their instincts with them into the world. A well-bred dog is not taught the sagacity with which he hunts his game : a bird requires no parental instruction, but builds her nest with as warm a lining, and in a spot as suitable and secure, as that in which it was hatched. But man must be taught, either by precept or example, to direct his bow, to climb his tree, to construct his hut : the rudest savage is only stimulated by instinct, and not instructed.

Here then lies the distinction, which may be confounded, but can never be removed ; that Nature has originally bestowed upon other animals a certain rank, and limited the extent of their capacity by an impassable degree : man she empowered and obliged to become the artificer of his own rank in the scale of beings, by the peculiar gift of improvable reason : improvable, certainly not to an unbounded extent, as some would fondly persuade themselves, yet to an extent of which the bounds have neither been assigned nor attained. The

rudest savage who may be compelled, as it has been pathetically said, to shelter himself beneath a heap of stones from the wind and rain, is “born with all those faculties which culture refines and education expands.”

Let what is called the *chain of existence* be drawn from the vegetable to the animal creation, and from insects and reptiles to the highest order of brutes, a rank to which the ape has far less claim than the dog or beaver; but here the parallel ceases. There is nothing philosophical in the comparison of a being possessed of improvable reason, with one that is governed by natural instinct, because there is no just analogy between the talents which are compared.

This distinguishing talent, however, is bestowed upon man to no effectual purpose, as long as he continues in circumstances which do not bring it into exertion. Man is, in fact, the creature of education and discipline, and is rendered so by the very faculty which charac-

terizes him ; neither is it from what he is born, but from what he is capable of becoming, that he is entitled to claim a place at the head of created beings that fall within our knowledge. Supposing, therefore, as some may be contented to suppose, that the employment of the human faculties had no higher object than the advantages it produces in the present life, by exalting the character and enlarging the rational happiness of mankind, it would still be desirable that the latent powers of intellect should be excited, and the virtues of which the civilized mind is susceptible brought forward into action. Even to those who carry their views no farther, it must still appear a proof of wisdom in the Creator, if he has provided to secure the exercise of the best faculties of the human race, at the same time that he has assigned them faculties of such a nature as to be improved, by that exercise, to an indefinite extent.

But when the question is put, to what purpose this improvement of reason, with all its

consequences, tends ; it is not an answer entirely satisfactory, to reply, that mankind are thus enabled to increase the sum of their present happiness. Reason is certainly very ill employed in arguing, that the happiness of mankind is *not* promoted by its exercise. But though there can be no hesitation in affirming that the quantity of human happiness is greatly enhanced by the exercise of reason, and that its destined use is partly to make this addition ; still there is so much imperfection, at best, in our earthly happiness, that it would be difficult to suppose this the sole and ultimate end for which reason was bestowed on man.

It is scarcely worth while to glance at a conjecture of some of the ancients, who pretended that man was made capable of reason, that he might hold dominion over the irrational animals. They require no such domination. An infinitely small proportion allow the assistance of man, and not one requires it. They are perhaps necessary to the human race, and we be-

lieve, were created for its use ; but the human race is so far from being necessary to them, that the greater part degenerate, and lose their finest properties, when reduced to a domestic state.

The only answer to this question which admits of examination, and agrees with the analogy of nature, affirms, that man has the power of reason, and is destined to employ it, with reference to a future and higher state of existence. The assurance of this can only come from Revelation. But the rational faculties of man afford the strongest presumptive argument in favour of a future state. For, that one who uses these faculties best, should proceed in the acquisition of knowledge and advancement of virtue, and then, at the very time when having passed the weakness of childhood and the vehemence of youth, he seemed to approach nearest to perfection, should be suddenly plunged into annihilation, is an order of things so inconsistent with the general appearance of

the Creator's wisdom, that the wisest of the ancients could never reconcile their minds to the belief of such a dispensation.

I shall, therefore, proceed on the assumption, that the faculty man possesses of improvable reason, is not superfluous ; but was given him to be employed, partly for the advancement of his happiness on earth, but chiefly with reference to a future state of existence, in conformity with some ulterior plan of his Creator.

This view of human life is not only justified, but decisively confirmed, by the Christian scriptures. The mind is there represented as possessed of talents intrusted to its use, of which an account is to be rendered hereafter. Human life is declared to be a state of discipline, in which the various faculties of mankind are to be exerted, and their moral character formed, tried, and confirmed, previously to their entering upon a future and higher state of existence for which they are destined ; and in which the final condition of every individual will be proportioned

to the use he has made of his talents and opportunities in this preparatory stage. Life, therefore, is with great propriety described as a race in which a prize is to be contended for; as a season for sowing the seeds of a future and immortal harvest; as a journey, in which mankind are merely pilgrims; as a warfare, in which the combatants must arm themselves with all the virtues, and employ them with zealous courage and enduring patience, that they may be fitted to partake hereafter in the glories of an eternal triumph.

This double consideration, of the nature of the human faculties as requiring culture and exercise, and of the purport of this life as a state of discipline, is absolutely necessary as a clue to any inquiry into the actual appearance of the world. In all questions which relate to the skill of any contrivance, it is pre-supposed, that the intention and execution of the work are alike understood, and considered together. The most harmonious movements or the wisest arrangements may be mistaken for chance and

confusion, by those who are unacquainted with the design to which they are directed. It is evident, that if the present state is not final, if its object is discipline, what might appear to us the happiest, or easiest, or best condition for the human race in an immediate view, would not be the most suitable to the ultimate intention of the Creator. The object which would be present to the divine mind, in determining the circumstances in which it were expedient to place mankind, would be, to assign them that state of being which was best suited to render this world the stage of discipline it was designed to prove: one that should most effectually and inevitably work out the powers, exercise the virtues, and display the character of man. And it might be expected from what we see in other instances of the Creator's wisdom, that he would place mankind in circumstances through which the order of things best calculated to further this design, should naturally establish itself, without any such immediate interference as might disturb the spontaneity of human actions.

I think it may be rendered evident that He has done so : and the proof of Wisdom I shall endeavour to illustrate, is this ; that the order of things, in which the human race arrives at the highest degree of improvement, and has the widest scope for moral and intellectual perfection, is inevitably, and with some trifling exceptions, universally established, by the operation of a single principle, and the instinctive force of a single natural desire.

CHAPTER III.

Whether Equality, or Inequality, of Ranks and Fortunes, is the Condition best suited to the Developement and Improvement of the human Faculties.

BEFORE I proceed to explain the action of a principle on which so much depends, and the mode of its operation, it will be requisite to institute a careful inquiry as to the situation most favourable to the exercise of the talents and virtues of the human race. In a case so intimately affecting their condition, it is not sufficient to prove the wise subservience of the means to the end, unless the end itself be wisely proposed. It is not enough that the contrivance should be aptly suited to the object, unless the effect of the whole prove bene-

ficial. However we might applaud, for example, the exquisite skill with which a tyrant had contrived his implements of torture, we should certainly hesitate to call his contrivance wisdom.

Supposing it then to be the design of the Creator, as laid down in the preceding chapter, to develop the faculties and virtues of mankind in this stage of existence, as preparatory to another ; what shall we affirm to be the condition of human life, which appears best calculated to answer this purpose ? Is it society, or is it solitude ? Is it a separation of tribes, or an union of many ? Is it a state of equality, or a state consisting of various degrees of rank and fortune ?

If this question were to be decided *à priori*, and without reference to experience and observation, it would certainly be determined in favour of equality. For what can be more promising as an ideal picture, than a state in which tyranny and servility, penury and super-

fluity, are alike unknown; where, all being equal, the general harmony meets with no interruption, and the abundance of one ministers to the necessities of another?

But as, in seeing a complicated piece of machinery, the most experienced artisan could not judge of its powers or defects without the opportunity of observing its action and operation: so the wisest philosopher can only reason upon the effect of peculiar situation on the intricate habits and passions of mankind, from what he knows by recorded experience and observation. And judging thus of the effect of equality upon the energies and happiness of mankind, it becomes no less undesirable in theory, than it is unattainable in general practice. Wherever equality is found to exist, and we have now a tolerable acquaintance with almost every region of the world, mankind are in the lowest and most savage state. Accordingly, those writers who have traced all the evils of human life to the inequalities of rank and condition, have been forced to

lay this paradox as their foundation : that the savage life, which is unwarrantably called the state of nature, is that state of happy security, every deviation from which begins in error, and terminates in wretchedness. Rousseau laments the necessity of acknowledging, that “the very distinctive faculty of man, that of progressive improvement, is the source of all his evils, because it carries him from the original condition in which he might pass his days in tranquillity and indolence.”* The savages of the Caribbee islands, who barter their hammock in the morning for some trifling gratification, and weep in the evening for its loss, are, according to one of their eulogists, “the most happy, the least vicious, the most social, the most healthy, and the least counterfeit of all the nations of the world.”† “Is the savage op-

* Discours sur l'Inégalité. He afterwards adds, “Inequality, scarcely existing in a state of nature, grows with the growth of man’s faculties and reason, and is permanently authorised by the establishment of property and laws.”

† Père du Tertre. Raynal was also a great admirer of savage life. These defend equality as it is found. Con-

pressed by superior fierceness and strength? Let his enemy," says Rousseau, "but once turn his head, the weaker darts twenty paces into the forest, his chains are broken, and he loses sight of his enemy for ever."

That this freedom, carelessness, and indolence, are the compensations which savages enjoy for many of the advantages which their circumstances deny them, I shall have occasion hereafter to prove more explicitly: but it never can be allowed that the perfection of existence is compatible with insensibility to improvement, or that happiness is consistent with ignorance of rational enjoyment. It is forgotten by the querulous and disappointed advocates of savage life, that the evils of society do not owe their birth to civilization, but spring up in spite of it; and are to be referred to the nature of man, not to the constitution of society. The same course of argument might reject agriculture, because weeds thrive quickest in the richest soil.

dorcet, Godwin, &c. only recommend an ideal equality, united with civilization.

A partial survey of civilized life represents, it is true, each individual neglectful of the general good, and struggling merely for the advancement of his own; flourishing by the discomfiture of competitors, and elevated by the depression of his brethren. But the other side of the picture shows individual advantage terminating in public benefits, and the desire of aggrandizement which is stimulated by ambition or domestic partialities, contributing towards the welfare of the community at large. Man, in all situations, has both opportunity and inclination for vice, though all vices do not flourish equally in all situations. But ferocity, intemperance, and revenge, if they are not worse, certainly are not better than avarice, rapacity, or luxury: whilst the savage vices have no compensation of delicate taste, refined manners, improved understanding, or exalted virtues. A contest for riches or power does not more disturb the harmony of life, than the disputed possession of a palm-tree or a cabin: but the latter produces no other fruit than

private rancour or revengeful malice : the former enriches the state by the addition of two active and useful citizens.

The argument, however, requires that it should be distinctly shown, why that state of civilization which admits and consists of a gradation of ranks and of unequal conditions, is precisely the situation which affords to man the best opportunities of performing the purposes of his being.

I. If we except that lowest species of the human race which the increase of population has driven to seek subsistence at the utmost verge of the habitable globe, and which seem to mark the ultimate point of degradation to which man can descend, no country is known to which the distinction of ranks is altogether wanting. The bravest warrior, or the most skilful hunter, becomes the chief of his tribe : nor can precedence exist, even of this rude sort, without exciting some emulation. But as this influence does not extend to the division of property,

and leads only to feats of courage and dexterity in the field, we may justly represent these scattered hunting tribes as an example of a state of nature or equality.

In fact, even of this degree of equality the native Indians of North and South America afford us almost the only instance.* Reduced in number, and degenerated, as there appears reason to believe, from a more improved state to which their ancestors had advanced, without government, or policy, or laws of their own, they occupy a few spots in that vast continent.† Their state of society exhibits to us

* "The Indians are strangers to all distinctions of property, except in the articles of domestic use, which every one considers as his own, and increases as circumstances admit. No visible form of government is established. They allow of no such distinction as magistrate or subject, every one appearing to enjoy an independence that cannot be controlled. They are total strangers to the idea of separate property in land."—Travels by order of the American Government, under Captains Clark and Lewis.

† This description does not include the Indians of New Spain and Peru, many of whom are settled in villages, and

an assemblage of human beings, whose highest enjoyment is indolence, and who are only roused even to a temporary exertion, by the sting of necessity. No prospect of security can excite them to the energy requisite for agriculture. Could an European village be transported into Chili or Paraguay, with all its industry and foresight, and ensured from the maladies attendant on such a change of climate, the soil and seasons would overspread them with luxury and plenty for many generations. But the inhabitants of South America, with all the advantages of unimpoverished land and luxuriant climate, are not less pressed for subsistence than the occupants of the most rugged and inhospitable islands.* Careless of the

retain the advantages which they derived before the Spanish conquests from a more advanced state of government and civilization.

* “The effects of famine are common to almost all the equinoctial regions. In the province of New Andalusia in South America, I have seen villages whose inhabitants are forced to disperse themselves from time to time in the deserts, to pick up a scanty subsistence from the wild plants. In the province de los Pastos, the Indians, when the potatoes

regular and fixed supply which cultivation affords, they depend for two thirds of the year on the precarious resources of hunting and fishing; and are so sparing in their exertions towards providing a sufficient stock, that a diminution of the quantity of game, or delay of the usual season for procuring it, exposes them to all the misery of scarcity and famine. Yet are they incapable of judging of the probable future from the past distress: nor ever led by experience to prevent the recurrence of an evil. The same indifferent carelessness appears also in their dress and lodging, if such terms can be applied to the miserable protections which the Americans contrive against the vicissitudes

fail, which are their principal nourishment, repair sometimes to the most elevated ridge of the Cordilleras to subsist on the juice of achupallas. The Otomais at Uruana swallow, during several months, potter's earth, to absorb the gastric juice. Under the torrid zone, where a beneficent hand seems every where to have scattered the germ of abundance, man, careless and phlegmatic, experiences periodically a want of subsistence which the industry of more civilized nations banishes from the most sterile regions of the North."

—Humboldt, vol. i. p. 123.

of weather. It appears, also, in the total absence of a quality so universal among civilized nations, curiosity: a quality which probably originates in the idea of gaining some new acquisition, and is certainly in a great degree characteristic of an active mind. An European, with all his convenience of dress and equipage, passes unnoticed through an assembly of half-naked Indians; or if he attracts any degree of curiosity, a fragment of scarlet cloth, or a string of beads, is more coveted than any addition he could propose to their real comfort.*

* Dr. Pinckard, after describing his visit to an Indian town up the river Berbische, adds, "The curiosity by which we were actuated was by no means reciprocal: we passed through their huts, and round their persons, in a manner unnoticed; and they continued at work, or unemployed, exactly as we found them." *Notes on the West Ind.* ii. 422. All travellers unite in the same remarks. See Ashe, or Ulloa. The latter says, "When an Indian is settled on his hams, their usual and favourite posture, no reward can make him stir; so that if a traveller has lost his way, and happens to reach any of their cottages, they hide themselves, though the whole of their labour would consist in accompanying the traveller a quarter of a league, for which they would be generously rewarded."

Without dwelling on the detail of manners uniformly the same, and generally acknowledged, it is sufficient to observe that equality of rank and condition, wherever it is met with, affords a similar scene of careless ignorance, and indifference to all improvement. The nearer you approach towards it, the more stagnant and inactive is the human mind; the farther you recede from it, the energies are excited in proportion. It must be allowed, therefore, that the same appearance must have a common cause of universal operation. Is this cause to be sought, as some writers have been inclined to conclude, in the nature of the people themselves? Certainly not. We learn the contrary from the same evidence which has hitherto been adduced against them. We are informed by Ulloa,* that “a great part of the rusticity in their minds must be attributed to the want of culture. The Indians of the missions of Paraguay are, among others, remarkable proofs of this, where, by the zeal,

* Vol. i. p. 435.

address, and exemplary piety of the Jesuits, a regular well-governed republic of rational men has been established: and the people, from an ambulatory and savage manner of living, have been reduced to order, reason, and religion.* In all the villages of the mission are schools for learning, not only to read and write, but also mechanic trades; and the artificers here are not inferior to those of Europe. These Indians in their customs and intellects are a different sort of people from those before mentioned; *not that they have any natural advantage over the others*, for I have observed throughout the whole kingdom, that the Indians of the several provinces through which I travelled, are alike."

A more general intercourse with uncivilized nations has now in a great measure removed the erroneous prejudice which formerly existed

* It is much to be regretted, that an improvement so happily begun, should have been stopped by the recal of the Jesuits in 1767. A favourable account of the Indian community established by them may be seen in Burke's *European Settlements*, vol. i.

upon this subject ; and it is commonly agreed, that education and habit contribute more than climate to form the man ; and that the barbarism of savages is to be ascribed to the defects of their civil, and not of their natural constitution. The cause, in fact, is no other than that very equality, upon which so many undeserved encomiums have been lavished ; but which removes at once from the mind of man all the industrious emulation, which is excited among civilized people by the desire of bettering their individual condition.

Happy savage ! say the advocates of equality :* if his cabin but ill defends him from the storms, or his tattered blanket from the cold, he sees no proud superiors who behold his shivering with insulting pity ; no lofty palaces, which seem to mock his poor and indigent habitation. They forget, that to the absence of this palace and these superiors, he owes the misery of his hut of reeds, and the insufficiency of his scanty clothing.

* Rousseau sur l'Inégalité.

The truth of this becomes obvious on a very slight consideration. Men, in every state, are less induced to a change of their present habits by reason, than by example. If you affirm to an American that the prospective labour of a month or two will enable him to rest through the year secure in his supply of food, and to defy a scarcity of game, you excite no emotion in his mind ; the ideas to be conveyed are so numerous, and those to be eradicated so deeply rooted, that it is impossible by arguments of this nature to effect a change of habits. But let an European settle in his neighbourhood, let him see the comfort of his habitation, the plenty of his granary, the warmth of his clothing, the regular process of his industry ; and by degrees he will exchange his furs for useful implements, rather than for spirits ; will construct his cabin with logs instead of reeds ; and acknowledge the excellence of the example by his imitation.*

* “ The desire of property proceeds from experience ; and the industry by which it is gained, or improved, requires such a habit of acting with a view to distant objects, as may

This melioration, however, will never take place, while "all around him are clothed in the same simple garb, feed on the same plain fare, and have houses and furniture exactly similar."* Though his forests abound with timber, that he cannot imagine to himself the superiority of a dwelling built by geometrical rules, or understand it when proposed to him, is no matter of

overcome the present disposition either to sloth or to enjoyment. This habit is slowly acquired; and is, in reality, a principal distinction of nations in the advanced state of mechanic and commercial arts." Ferguson on Civil Society, part ii. sect. 2.

If there could be any doubt on this subject, it is sufficiently removed by the improvements made in the condition of the Indian nations of North America by the Quakers, entirely on the principle of example. An interesting account of their success is given in the Ed. Review, vol. viii. p. 442. Euripides perhaps alludes to the want of objects of emulation at Sparta, in the following lines of a play which abounds in political discussion.

Σοφὸν δὲ, πενιὰν τ' εἰσορᾶν τὸν ὄλβιον,
Πένητά τ' εἰς τοὺς πλουσίους ἀποβλέπειν,
Ζηλοῦνθ', ἵν' αὐτὸν χρημάτων ἔρως ἔχη.
Τὰ τ' οἰκτρὰ τοὺς μὴ ἐυστυχεῖς δεδoικέναι.

Supplices, l. 187.

* Robertson's America, vol. ii. 133.

surprise, while he is surrounded by huts like that in which he was born. But if he saw before him the comfort and security of a regularly constructed habitation, the latent spark of industry would be excited, and his ignorant patience converted into active emulation.

This example, however, will never arise among the nations of any uncivilized country, and if introduced, will be witnessed without effect, till the first blow has been given to the system of equality, by recognising that division of property which secures to every man the fruit of his own labour. It is this mainspring which keeps the arts and civilized industry in motion. "The first, who having enclosed a spot of ground, has taken upon himself to assert, *This is mine*, and has remained undisturbed in the possession of it, gives a new aspect to the society,"* and lays the foundation, not of crimes, and wars, and murder, as Rousseau proceeds to say, as if these were unknown to the savage; but of improvement and civilization.

* Rousseau sur l'Inégalité.

Man is easily brought and quickly reconciled to labour ; but he does not undertake it gratuitously. If he is in possession of immediate ease, he can only be induced to relinquish that present advantage by the allurements of expected gain. Gratification, which in some degree or other forms the chief excitement of civilized life, is almost unknown to the savage. The only stimulus felt by him, is that of necessity. He is impelled by hunger to hunt for subsistence, and by cold to provide against the rigour of the seasons. When his stock of provision is laid in, his rude clothing prepared, and his cabin constructed, he relapses into indolence ; for the wants of necessity are supplied, and the stimulus which urged him is removed. However experienced he may be in the preparation of skins for clothing or of reeds for building, beyond the wants of his own family he has no demand for ingenuity or skill ; for the equality of property has confined each man's possessions to the bare necessities of life ; and though he were to employ his art in providing for his whole tribe, they have nothing to offer him in exchange. As

long as this state of things continues, it is plain that we can expect neither improvement of art nor exertion of industry. Whatever is fabricated will be fabricated with almost equal rudeness, whilst each individual supplies his own wants; and he will continue to supply them, as long as the wants of the society are limited to the demands of nature. An intelligent traveller, who had an opportunity of observing this on the spot, remarks exactly to the point, that “the Indians of Guiana have no interest in the accumulation of property, and, therefore, are not led to labour in order to attain wealth. Living under the most perfect equality, they are not impelled to industry by that Spirit of emulation, which in society leads to great and unwearied toil.”*

II. But as soon as it has been agreed, by a compact of whatever kind, that the property before belonging to the community at large, shall be divided among the individuals who compose it, and that whatever each of them shall hereafter obtain, shall be considered as

* Notes on the West Indies, ii, 246.

his exclusive possession ; the effect of this division will show that industry requires no other stimulus than a reward proportioned to its exertion.

We have an instance in the natives of the Pelew Islands, who, deprived as they were of all external advantages, afford a most decisive contrast to the inactivity of the American tribes. Before their accidental discovery in 1783, they had enjoyed no intercourse with civilized nations, had no acquaintance with the use of iron, or the cultivation of corn, or regular manufacture. But they had been fortunate in the establishment of a division of ranks, ascending from the servant to the king ; and a division of property, rendering not only “ every man’s house, furniture, or canoe, his own, but also the land allotted to him, as long as he occupied and cultivated it.”* The effect of this is distinguishable in habits so different from those hitherto represented, that, “ the portion of time each family could spare from

* Keate’s Account of the Pelew Islands.

providing for their natural wants, was passed in the exercise of such little arts, as, while they kept them active and industrious, administered to their convenience and comfort." Here also were no traces of that want of curiosity, which all travellers remark as so extraordinary in America. Industry had sharpened their minds. The natives were constantly interested in obtaining every information respecting the English tools and workmanship; and the brother of Abba Thule found amusement for hours, in the novelty of a grindstone, polishing the iron which was scattered about the tents.

In fact, the division of property is the source from which all the arts of civilization proceed. Before this division has taken place, the indolent suffer no inferiority, the active receive no gain. But from the date of the recognition of property to the individual, each man is rich, and comfortable, and prosperous, setting aside the common infirmities which flesh is heir to, according to his portion of effective industry

or native genius.* From this period, he is continually impelled by his desires from the pursuit of one object to another; and his activity is called forth in the prosecution of the several arts which render his situation more easy and agreeable.

* To limit industry or genius, and narrow the field of individual exertion by any artificial means, is an injury to human nature of the same kind as that brought on by a community of possessions. Where there is no stimulus to industry, things are worst;—where industry is circumscribed, they cannot prosper; and are then only in a healthy state, when every avenue to personal advantage is open to every talent and disposition. A state of equality is an instance of the first case; the division of the people into castes, as among the ancient Egyptians and still among the Hindus, of the second. This division has been considered by all intelligent travellers as one powerful cause of the stationary character of the inhabitants of that country: and the effect would have been still more pernicious, if time or necessity had not introduced some relaxation into the rigorous restrictions originally established, and so ancient, as to be attributed to SIVA. As long, however, as the rule is generally adhered to, that a *man of a lower class is restricted from the business of a higher class*, so long, we may safely predict, India will continue what it is in point of civilization. See *Asiat. Researches*, vol. v. art. 3. An approach to the same effect may be witnessed in the limitation of honours, privileges, and immunities in some countries of Europe.

Since the produce of every man's labour is secured to his own use, the soil, being better tilled, affords a better return : and the plenty of provisions allows the society to clothe and lodge themselves with more attention to comfort. By this application to a variety of objects, commodities of different kinds are produced ; which are exchanged for one another, according to the demand of different individuals. This operation is so simple, that it may be easily expected in the poorest community ; and our voyagers found it well understood by the natives of the South Sea Islands. At the same time it is so extensive in its effects, that all the different ramifications of trade and commerce, and even the distinctions of wealth and rank, may be traced to this common origin. For, through this medium, the division of property leads immediately to accumulation.

At first, the best hunter, and the best maker of arms for defence or the chase, would become the richest individual of the society. These desire to display their wealth, as the

African chiefs, by ornament, and to feel its advantage in their comfort. They part with the superfluous produce of their skill to the man who weaves them the finest cloth, and tinges it with the brightest dye; or who provides for them the best-constructed habitation.* So that those who exercise the arts of ingenuity at home, soon become no less rich in the means of subsistence than those who procure it from the forest, or labour for it in the field. Property thus acquired, and exceeding the continual wants of the proprietor, descends to the children of the artist; and with it is perhaps inherited

* As Paris, in the Iliad, is represented as inhabiting a house built by the best artificers in Troy. B. vi. l. 315.

“Οἱ οἱ ἐποίησαν θάλαμον, καὶ δῶμα καὶ ἀνλὴν,

Εγγύθι τε Πριάμοιο καὶ Ἑκτορος, ἐν πόλει ἄκρῃ.

When artificers were in sufficient repute to be sought out for their skill, we cannot doubt that they would be amply repaid for it. “There was in Homer’s time great difference in the possession of individuals; some had large tracts of land with numerous herds and flocks, others had none. This state of things is generally favourable to the arts; a few who have a superabundance of wealth, being better able, and generally more willing, to encourage them than numbers who have only a competency.” Mitford’s Greece, vol. i. p. 185.

the skill by which it was obtained. In process of time, successful warriors, or the children of successful warriors, rich in conquered lands, together with those who have inherited or gained possessions which exempt them from the necessity of farther labour, begin in periods of tranquillity to require amusements at home: for, long before society has arrived at this point, the chief enjoyment has ceased to be found in indolence.* This desire of amusement brings into demand a new set of persons, the men of letters; whose business it is first to entertain, and afterwards to instruct; and who must receive at least such a reward of their powers as repays them for withdrawing from active labour. To furnish amusement during the respite from the toils of the field of war, which a feast or a peace afforded, was the first employment of the epic and dramatic poets of antiquity; as well as of the Troubadours and

* "In every fertile soil, where a great extent of property is allowed, there is room for elegance, sumptuousness, and the encouragement of the arts." Wallace on Numbers of Mankind, p. 18.

minstrels of the middle ages.* These beginnings, as culture refines the taste and increases the demand, lead at length to the infinite variety of intellectual pursuits, which form the business of so large a part of the society, as it advances farther towards literature and refinement.

National possessions require the defence, not of every citizen, as in a ruder state, since it would be now inexpedient to divert them from more useful avocations; but of an established profession. Individual possessions require, as they become more extended and various, the defence of statutes, which it is also the business of a peculiar profession to interpret. Medicine, which in uncivilized countries is confined to the

* The poet, or harper, has a place among the chiefs in Homer, who describes his office and situation, representing himself, probably, under the character of Demodocus.

Τῷ δ' ἄρα Ποντόνοος θῆκε θρόνον ἀργυρόηλον
 Μέσσω δαιτυμόνων, πρὸς κίονα μακρὸν ἐρείσας.
 Αὐτὲρ ἐπεὶ πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ἐξ ἔντο,
 Μοῦσ' ἀρ' αἰεὶδον ἀνῆκεν ἀειδέμεναι κλέα ἀνδρῶν.

Od. O. v. 65.

experimental knowledge of a few simples, becomes a complex and detached study. Religion, too, is no longer united with the office of chief, but it is intrusted to a peculiar body of men. Commerce takes a wider range ; and what was once confined to the simple barter of superfluous articles, branches out into an arduous science, and opens an extensive field of speculation.*

These are the principal features, though the portrait is very incomplete, of the gradual progress of all the arts, all the sciences, and all the opulence which distinguish civilization. It is not pretended that we can trace every stroke of the outline, still less that we can point out every shade that contributes towards the finished picture ; the effect of which, after all, is subject to infinite variations, according to peculiarity of situation, climate and government. The process which leads from the rudest to the most civilized society, continues for many centuries, and meets with many and various checks before

* See Millar on the Origin of Ranks, p. 3, 157.

the perfect figure is formed ; like some of the secret processes of nature, which elude our observation and research, but terminate in her most curious and valuable productions.

And that the civilized man is to be classed as the most perfect, and not as a depraved part of the species, it can scarcely be necessary to prove. The union of various characters, whose bent of disposition has inclined them to the different pursuits which have been just enumerated as composing civilized life, produces the quick apprehension, the versatile talent, the accurate discernment, the steady conduct, which entitled man to be called the chief of created beings. What comparison is there between that perfection of the corporeal powers, which a constant dependence upon the senses has produced in the savage, and that habitual power of reason with which a cultivated mind is accustomed to trace events to their sources, and pursue them to their consequences ? If experience assures us, that, wherever equality is established, savageness will continue, let us see to

what state equality would reduce the world. Observe the savage in his retirement ; his eyes bent on vacancy, his stagnant mind making no compensation for the inactivity of his body ; or follow him to his feast, which has no object but intemperate excess, and is succeeded by a deathlike torpor ; or watch him when roused by hostility from his indolence, cherishing even by artificial means, hatred and revenge, and vigorous only to supplant his enemy by stratagem and treachery. Compare this representation, which it is mortifying to hold up as the description of a human being, not with the philosopher, whose active mind could even find in the bath a solution of his problem ; not with another of the wonders of antiquity, who refused even to sleep a complete dominion over his faculties ; but merely with the ordinary exertion and habitual activity of civilized existence ; with the vigilant observation that unfolds the mysteries of nature, or the patient abstraction that facilitates the works of art ; with the energy of animated conversation that dignifies the rational entertainment ; and then let the moral-

ist or historian misuse as he will the powers he owes to civilization, in extolling an uncivilized state, yet he can never disprove the acknowledged fact that inequality sharpens and exercises the natural powers of man, and that this exercise of the natural powers brings the human species to that degree of excellence which He who made him capable of it, intended him to attain.

III. At this point of the argument, however, I find myself opposed on my own ground by some of the latest advocates of equality. The Abbé Raynal and Rousseau, with others to whom allusion has heretofore been made, though perceiving that equality must produce savageness, still preferred the savage state for the sake of the equality. But another sect of inquirers, aspiring as anxiously as any one to the perfection of the human race, and enjoying indeed, a much brighter view of its perfectibility than common observers can be persuaded to entertain, recommend at the same time an equality of fortunes and conditions, as

tending both to produce that perfection, and to maintain it.* “The established administration of property,” we are told, “is the true levelling system with respect to the human species, by as much as the cultivation of intellect is more valuable and more characteristic of man, than the gratifications of vanity or appetite. Accumulation of property treads the powers of thought in the dust, extinguishes the sparks of genius, and reduces the great mass of mankind to be immersed in sordid cares ; besides depriving the rich of the most salu-

* I am aware it may be thought that I have paid too much attention to a writer now so completely forgotten as Mr. Godwin. But it seemed to me very much to the purpose of a treatise like the present, to show that the inequality of conditions which the ordinances of Providence render necessary, is also agreeable to the attribute of divine wisdom. And if this was to be proved, it was convenient to find the arguments on the opposite side concentrated, as in Mr. Godwin's *Political Justice* ; and at the same time it was fair to take the ablest and best known statement of them that has appeared in this country.

It is probable, too, that many, though they may allow with Mr. Malthus that equality is unattainable in practice, may agree generally with Mr. Godwin that it is desirable in theory.

brious and effectual motives to activity. If superfluity were banished, the necessity of the greater part of the manual industry of mankind would be superseded; and the rest, being amicably shared among the active and vigorous members of the community, would be burdensome to none. Every man would have a frugal yet wholesome diet; every man would go forth to that moderate exercise of his corporeal functions, that would give hilarity to the spirits; none would be made torpid by fatigue, but all would have leisure to cultivate the kindly and philanthropical affections, and to let loose their faculties in the search of intellectual improvement.”*

The advantages represented to us as likely to result from this equal distribution of the gifts of fortune, are twofold—intellectual and moral. With respect to the first, how rapid, it is said, “would be the advances of intellect, if all men were admitted into the field of knowledge! At present, ninety-nine persons in a

* Political Justice, b. viii. c. 3.

hundred are no more excited to any regular exertions of general and curious thought, than the brutes themselves. What would be the state of the public mind in a nation where all were wise, all had laid aside the shackles of prejudice and implicit faith, all adopted, with fearless confidence, the suggestions of reason, and the lethargy of the soul was dismissed for ever? ”*

It is here impossible not to envy that sanguine imagination, which surveying mankind from China to Peru, could discover a single nation so happily exempted from the common frailties of humanity, as to disclose the germ, or even to contain the seeds, of a general improvement here so luxuriantly described. The truth is, that man, who obviously requires an urgent stimulus to manual exertion, has equal need of a strong and sensible incitement to the exertion of the mind. It is not necessary to maintain the degrading opinion, that the improvement of the intellect can only be stimu-

* Polit. Justice, vol. i. p. 461.

lated by the actual and immediate influence of the love of gain. It is sufficient to know, that the vast and complicated machine of human society, the movements of which are as intricate as the motion is constant, was originally actuated, and is kept in continual activity, by each individual's desire of bettering his own condition. Experience proves this; by showing us, from the examples of rude countries, that exertion is never made till it begins to be individually productive. Banish then superfluity, remove what is called "the gratification of vanity or appetite;" is it reasonable to imagine that the same industry will be employed, when the inducement by which it is excited has been taken away? The impulse, indeed, once caused, the active habits once introduced by the hope of individual advancement, reaches far beyond the immediate influence of the principle; but it does not follow that it would continue, if the principle itself were removed. That natural and spirit-stirring desire is the nourishment of the body politic; it is the fertilizing source which supplies the juices to the

tree ; and though the stem may for a while show signs of life, and even continue to put forth shoots after the nourishment is dried up, it soon becomes a barren trunk, the decaying monument of former strength and vigour.

What, I would ask, are the circumstances which in the general constitution of civilized society lead to the cultivation of the mind ? Is it, comprehensively speaking, the desire of spreading useful knowledge ? is it the abstract love of science ? is it not rather the conviction, that wealth is procured by learning, that distinguished honours reward distinguished ability, which implants the principle in early life, which generates in youth the habits of industry, and animates the labours of maturer age ? The largest share, beyond comparison, of the useful discoveries in moral or philosophical science, in history or civil policy, is derived from the learned professions, which are filled by men who have looked forward from their youth to the various branches of learning as the means of acquiring both subsistence and

reputation. But these sources of information will be cut off, when the hope of improving fortune, and of accumulating property, is removed ; when the inexorable agrarian law prescribes to each man his condition, apports to him his lot, and forbids him to improve it. The love of fame and distinction may operate for a little while, and upon a few minds ; but being, as we are assured, “ a delusion,”* it will soon cease to deceive, when no longer supported by the substantial good of increased fortune, and enlarged means of gratification. It matters not that the information contributed to the general stock by the leisure of the learned professions, deviates from the regular path of their duties ; that it is not connected with their necessary labours, but the voluntary amusement of their retirement ; for the habit which is thus exercised in retirement, was generated in the activity of business ; and the study which becomes recreation, owes its origin to the necessity of labour : like the stream

* Polit. Justice, i. 487.

which fertilizes the valleys, but descends from the side of some bleak and barren mountain.

The argument which is commonly employed to enforce youthful application, is the prospect of future success and competency. How is it that a father urges his son to overcome his natural indolence? He points out to his observation some prosperous adventurer, who, born to slender circumstances, by industry, temperance, and prudence, has raised himself to public distinction or splendid fortune. His precepts, thus illustrated by the examples which the world every where affords, must have a powerful, and, it may be added, an honourable effect upon the mind. But reverse this intelligible argument; and say, "Enter the field of knowledge, promote the general advance of intellect. Let your mind be delivered from all anxiety about corporal support, and expatiate freely in the field of thought which is congenial to her. It is the duty of each individual to assist the inquiries of all."*

* Polit. Justice, vol. i. p. 463.

Few persons, I conceive, entertain such sanguine views of human nature, as to suppose that if the pursuit of knowledge had been encouraged by no other stimulants, it would not have been confined within much narrower limits.

Nor would it be a satisfactory answer to these observations, to point out the numerous persons who apply to the cultivation of their minds, though urged by no necessity. The necessity of labour to the majority, establishes a standard which it is an object of emulation to attain: but remove that general necessity, and you break the main-spring of the whole. It may be fairly asserted, that one third, at least, of the community receive as good an education now, as it would be possible to give them even though things were levelled to the proposed equality. Yet, notwithstanding the advantages of education, the example of general activity, and the force of early habit, the proneness of the mind to sink into languid indolence, as soon as it ceases to be stimulated by the

immediate view of reward or the sensible pressure of necessity, too plainly blazons the truth that mankind are not so constituted as to be swayed by abstract rules, rather than sensible motives; and that nothing can be more chimerical than the expectation of a whole people setting out upon the pursuit of knowledge, with no stronger inducement than the prospect of general utility.

It is, indeed, curious to observe how impossible it is to preserve consistency in an argument the basis of which is defective. "Hereditary wealth," says the author of Political Justice, "is in reality a premium paid to idleness, an immense annuity expended to retain mankind in brutality and ignorance. The poor are kept ignorant by the want of leisure. The rich are furnished indeed with the means of cultivation and literature, but they are paid for being dissipated and extravagant. The most powerful means that malignity could have invented, are employed to prevent them from improving their talents, and becoming

useful to the public.”* What, however, are these means, except the power of enjoyment without the necessity of labour? It is hard to say what obstacles prevent the rich from cultivating the mind in the present state of things, which would not oppose the improvement of the whole community on the principle of universal and equal competency. To appoint to every one, on his entrance into the world, the limits of his fortune, would be the most successful method of encouraging ignorance and privileging idleness.

IV. The great, indeed the only test of political expediency, is practice: the only guide, experience. Of this the advocate of equality is aware; and therefore refers us, though in a cursory manner, which betrays his conviction of the weakness of his prop, to the “great practical authorities, Crete, Sparta, Peru, and Paraguay.”†

* Pol. Just. vol. ii. p. 459.

† The missionary government of Paraguay was so peculiar, and so far from independent, as not to require any discussion. Its authors and supporters, the Jesuits, did not spring up, and

The first mention of these countries does not certainly excite in the reader of history, the idea of moral or intellectual perfection. We remember the barbarous treatment of the Helots at Lacedæmon, and the systematic massacres by which their numbers were reduced. We are reminded of the proverbial disesteem in which the inhabitants of Crete* were held by the surrounding nations; while Peru and Paraguay suggest to us the idea of "societies, still at the time of their discovery, in the first stages of their transition from barbarism to civilization."† Let us, however, briefly inquire whether the imperfections were accidental, which forbid the proposing of these governments as models, or whether they proceeded from the very nature of their equal constitution, and are not, in fact, "great practical authorities" in favour of that different establish-

had not their education, in a state of equality. The Indians however, it may be observed, were only just emerging from gross ignorance when the missionaries were for them so unfortunately recalled.

* Polybius, l. 6. Mitford's Greece, i. 280.

† Robertson's America, iii. 353.

ment which nature has uniformly introduced where her laws are not counteracted by some very peculiar provision.

The laws of Minos led the way to those of Lycurgus. Their principles were the same;* namely, that all freemen should be equal. It will be sufficient, therefore, to comprehend them under one head, and to take the laws of Sparta from their panegyrist Xenophon.† Lycurgus, it appears, divided the possessions of the state into lots, according to the number of citizens he found; and these parcels of land were neither to be increased by subdivision,

* These principles were, "that all freemen should be equal; and therefore that none should have any property in lands or goods; but that citizens should be served by slaves, who cultivated the lands on public account. That the citizens should dine at public tables, and their families subsist on public stock." Adams on Ant. Republics. This constitution of Crete is enthusiastically described by Strabo. Aristotle, l. 2, de Rep. speaks of that of Sparta in a very different tone.

† De Laced. Politeia, cap. 7. See also Plutarch in Vitâ Lycurgi. According to the latter authority, even τὰ ἐπιπλά, personal and moveable property, was divided.

nor diminished by alienation ; but the redundant population was drained off in colonies. Every thing conspired to keep down and restrain the natural tendency of wealth towards inequality. The frugal and public mode of living rendered it useless to acquire wealth with a view to gratification. The peculiar nature of the current coin rendered its accumulation impossible. It was the boast of the country, “ that, in other states of Greece, all men were allowed to exercise their fortunes in whatever way they chose, in agriculture, navigation, merchandise, or the arts ; but that, in Sparta, Lycurgus had forbidden freemen to be concerned in any business by which money is acquired, and to study those things only which tend to preserve freedom.”*

If equality of condition can expand the mind, if relaxation from the labour to which the lower orders are commonly subjected, can withdraw it from the ground we tread upon, and raise it

* Xen. cap. 7.

to the subjects of contemplation that are congenial to active intelligence; here surely we shall find the genius to have flourished that enlarged science, and pointed out the immutable truths of morals; here we shall find the source of that refined literature, which has rendered Greece the instructress of so many ages. Far otherwise. The truth of history obliges us to confess, that the constitution of Sparta gave to her citizens independence and bravery, but none of the virtues which render those qualities engaging. The regulations which preserved equality, benumbed the activity of the mind; rendered the Spartans formidable indeed to their neighbours, because restless at home; and restless at home, because deprived of the resources of industry. Crete, though somewhat less barbarous, and not averse from the arts of poetry and music, has left to posterity no memorial of literary genius, or examples of illustrious virtue. Upon the whole, these republics are so far from having practically shown us, that no farther stimulants to the cultivation of the mind are required, than opportunity and leisure, that the very

equality which is the theme of so much panegyric is explained to us by writers of less equal and more laborious communities ; to whose unfettered activity alone it is owing, that the once important names of Crete and Lacedæmon are not as completely obscured and blotted out by time, as the ruins of Carthage or Babylon.*

Peru offers us an example of the equal division of property, but not of equality of condition.† The distinction of ranks was there fully established. “ A great body of the inhabitants, under the denomination of Yanaconas, were held in a state of servitude. Their garb

* Cicero (Brutus, l. 13) remarks that Sparta had never even produced an orator ; which is most extraordinary in a country where there was so much liberty. Tyrtaeus was an Athenian, though he wrote (or sung) at Lacedæmon. In Crete, the names of Thales, who was sent to Lacedæmon to soften the Spartan manners by his lyric poetry, and of Chrysothemis, who gained the musical prize at the Olympic games, have been recorded.

† The account of this division, and the mode of cultivation, as given by Robertson, is highly interesting, and seems the groundwork of Mr. Godwin's ideal system.

and houses were of a form different from those of freemen. Like the Tamenes of Mexico, they were employed in carrying burdens, and in performing every work of drudgery. Next to them in rank were such of the people as were free, but distinguished by no official or hereditary honours. Above them were raised what the Spaniards denominated Orejones. They formed what may be called the order of nobles, and in peace, as well as war, held every office of power or trust. At the head of all were the Children of the Sun, who, by their high descent and peculiar privileges, were as much exalted above the Orejones, as these were elevated above the people.”* These different orders must necessarily have infused a spirit into the general body, and have prevented that stagnation which results from total equality. The arts of industry and refinement, unknown in Sparta, were here carried to some perfection. But it is remarkable, that the peculiarity of their administration of property gives a prac-

* Robertson's America, vol. iii. p. 339.

tical illustration of the very evils which I originally alluded to, as universally accompanying the equalization of fortunes. "In the towns of the Mexican empire, stated markets were held, and whatever could supply any want or desire of man was an object of commerce. But in Peru, from the singular mode of dividing property, and the manner in which the people were settled, there was hardly any species of commerce carried on between different provinces; and the community was little acquainted with that active intercourse, which is at once a bond of union and an incentive to improvement." A recent intelligent traveller makes the same conclusion: "If we examine," he says, "the mechanism of the Peruvian government under the Yncas, generally too much exalted in Europe, we shall find, that wherever the people are divided into castes, of which each can only follow a certain species of labour, and wherever the inhabitants possess no particular property, the people, preserving for thousands of years the same appearance of external comfort, make

almost no advances in moral cultivation.”* Nor did these institutions, which denied to the Peruvians the advantages of refinement arising from industrious communication, compensate the loss, as with the Spartans and Cretans of old, by that public spirit and love of freedom which is the just object of admiration. “There is not an instance in history, of any people so little advanced in refinement, so totally destitute of military enterprise. Peru was subdued at once, and almost without resistance; and the most favourable opportunities of regaining their freedom, and of crushing their oppressors, were lost through the timidity of the people.”†

This review of those few countries which have, by artificial means, kept down the natural tendency of property to run into large and unequal masses, and have retained any degree of equality together with civilization, abundantly proves to us that the distribution of fortunes,

* Humboldt, vol. i. p. 162. Robertson, vol. iii. p. 355.

† Robertson, vol. iii. p. 356.

which nature has rendered inevitable, is in fact the only one conducive to general improvement. The most insuperable objection, however, still remains to be brought forward. "When labour should be rendered in the strictest sense voluntary, when it should cease to interfere with our improvement, and rather become a part of it, or, at worst, be converted into a source of amusement and variety,"* who would undertake those employments which form the largest, and not the least necessary part of the labour of the community, which no variety could render satisfactory, no perversion of taste amusing? to which, in short, nothing could reconcile the mind, but the necessity of working for subsistence, and the constant and presiding influence of gain? When the "quantity of exertion is to be so light, as rather to assume the guise of agreeable relaxation and gentle exercise, than of labour,"† what shall preserve all the roads, the mines, the canals, of the community?

* Polit. Just. vol. ii. p. 494.

† Pol. Just. ii. 482.

“ Labor omnia vincit
Improbis, et duris urgens in rebus egestas.”

But will the sense of justice, or the sense of shame, to which we are referred as the genuine correctives of idleness, cut a canal in a century, or induce a body of individuals, already, according to the supposition, possessed of competence, to conduct the subterraneous operations of a mine? At the first stroke, then, of equality, we are deprived of the useful, as well as of the precious metals; of coals, in many countries no less indispensable; the produce of the richest districts is locked up or wasted, while the poorest are reduced to famine through the want of cultivation. There is not a manufacture, even after the exclusion of all luxury, that does not require processes very “inconsistent with the most desirable state of human existence.”*

* The absence of luxuries, however ornamental, and even of the polite arts, might certainly be considered as desirable, if the condition of the main body of the people was in consequence improved. “Servants, labourers, and workmen of different kinds, make up the far greater part of every

How then was this difficulty overcome in the "great practical authorities" we have been considering? In a manner which must surely deter the advocates of equality from the defence even of their own system. In Sparta, four hundred thousand slaves were devoted to forty thousand citizens. In Crete, nine tenths of mankind were doomed to slavery, to support the citizens in total idleness, excepting those exercises proper for warriors. In Peru, it has already been observed, that "a great body of the inhabitants were kept in a state of servitude." And to this servitude, no doubt, the Peruvians were indebted for the celebrated road of the Yncas, extending from Cusco to Quito, about fifteen hundred miles.

political society. No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable." (Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, b. i. l. 8.) But the same great authority has observed with perfect truth, that the "accommodation of an European prince does not always so much exceed that of an industrious and frugal peasant, as the accommodations of the latter exceed those of an African king." Every condition of life is alike a gainer by the arts of civilization.

The political advantage, therefore, of equality is, we see, a splendid image,* which crumbles at the touch: and there would be no surer method of fixing mankind in stationary barbarism, if the constitution of things had not positively forbidden that it should ever be introduced into real or general practice. We are told, indeed, that a state of great intellectual improvement is to obviate the objection arising from indolence. Our experience, however, of the slow and painful progress of intellectual improvement does not authorize any sanguine expectations of a rapid or considerable advance beyond the present standard of civilized countries. The records of a hundred generations, during which we have a tolerable history of mankind, oblige us to conclude that there is no way by which

* It is impossible that these obstacles to its practice should not have been felt by Mr. Godwin, during the close attention to the subject which his inquiry demanded; but by an ingenious rejection of all details, and an abundance of general remark, he has kept the total impracticability of the system out of the first view of the reader, who is charmed by the delusive prospect, and overlooks the impassable barriers that lie between.

the mind can be so effectually prompted to exertion, as by the prospect of those tangible rewards which minister comfort or supply necessity. When the race of men shall have been to such a degree improved, as to require no other motives of action* than benevolence, and a sense of public utility, the main prop will certainly be taken from the argument which I have here pursued. But in the mean time it is not presumptuous to conclude, that the situation best calculated to improve by exercise the faculties of man, is civil society, consisting, as it does, of unequal fortunes, ranks, and conditions.†

* “The moment I require any farther reason for supplying you, than the cogency of your claim, the moment, in addition to the dictates of benevolence, I demand a prospect of reciprocal advantage to myself, there is an end of that political justice and pure equality of which I treat.” *Pol. Just.* ii. 513.

† This must not be understood as favouring the accumulation of wealth into few hands. The more gradual the steps by which you ascend from the lowest to the highest fortune, the more advantageous is the state of the community. Much inconvenience results, in many countries, from the colossal fortunes of a few individuals, contrasted with general poverty. The civilization is always least advanced where any of the intermediate steps are wanting.

CHAPTER IV.

Whether Equality or Inequality of Ranks and Fortunes, is the Condition best suited to the Exercise of Virtue.

IF the advantages arising to mankind from their union in civil society could be pursued no farther, it would be a sufficient evidence of the Creator's wisdom, that he had provided for bringing the human race into a situation so favourable for the development of their faculties. But intelligence, though the distinguishing ornament of our species, is still to be held inferior and subservient to virtue. And since the great object of our existence on earth is believed to be moral discipline, it might be, difficult to reconcile the inequality of conditions with that main purpose of human life,

unless a state consisting of such unequal conditions had a farther advantage, even beyond its first effect of bringing the mental faculties to their highest perfection. The truth is, however, that the inequality of conditions, which is the foundation of civil society, affords not only the best improvement of the human faculties, but the best trial of the human virtues ; it is the nursery most suited to their formation, and the theatre most fitted for their exercise.

The advocates of equality are not contented with denying this ; they assert the very contrary. “ Reduce all conditions to equality,” it has been said, “ and the great occasions of crime will be cut off for ever.” This bold declaration must not be admitted even in passing : for it is impossible to suppose any condition of things so equal, that no man shall desire what belongs to another. A change of this sort, if effected at all, must originate in the inward habits, and not in the outward situation of man. But the truer proposition is, that the great occasions of virtue would be cut off for

ever, without any corresponding deduction on the score of vice.* A complete community of goods, if it could possibly exist on a large

* Pol. Justice, i 462. The observations of Aristotle on this subject deserve attention, because he had an opportunity of seeing that of which we have no instance, the actual operation of a certain degree of equality with some share of comparative civilization. "The bare necessities of life, food and fuel, clothes to cover our nakedness, and a home to shelter us from the storm, comforts, which it is pretended, the equalization of property would enable all men to enjoy, are not the only incentives to injustice. The greatest crimes are committed for none of these things. It is not to avoid cold or hunger that tyrants cover themselves with blood; and states decree the most illustrious rewards, not to him who catches a thief, but to him who kills an usurper. Phaleas's plan of equalizing property is useful, therefore, against the *least and most inconsiderable only of the evils which infest society*, evils against which there is an appropriate remedy in *industry and moderation*.

"The equalization of fortunes may have some slight tendency to stifle animosity and prevent dissension. But its effect is always inconsiderable, and often doubtful; since those who think themselves entitled to superiority will not patiently brook equality. The wickedness of man is boundless; and is an evil that cannot be remedied by equalizing property, whether lands or moveables." Lib. 2. de Polit. chap. vii.; or v. of Dr. Gillies's translation, from which I here quote, as being sufficiently accurate for the purpose.

scale, might diminish the temptations to fraud and robbery ; but these constitute only a small part of the moral guilt of mankind ; while, on the other hand, all those virtuous habits which derive both their origin and their perfections from the varieties of the human condition, all the dispositions of mind to which the different circumstances of civilized life give play and action, would lose the occasions under which they are now formed, and the opportunities in which they are displayed. The Platonic view of moral virtue, which places it in the contemplation of ideal excellence, may be consistent with a state of perfection, but is incompatible with a state of probation. Virtue is an active and energetic habit, arising from the various relations of human life, and exercised in the practice of real duties ; so that, as you increase the number and variety of those relations, you enlarge its sphere of action ; and in proportion as you contract them, in proportion as you bring down the conditions of mankind towards an uniform level, you lower the standard, and reduce the degree of moral excellence.

It may possibly be argued, that this description of virtue originates not in the nature of virtue itself, but in the situation of man ; and that I represent as its essential property what is only its accidental quality. It may be thought, that although, according to the present constitution of things, man must certainly deny himself many gratifications, and repress his natural feelings and desires, in compliance with the laws ordained for his conduct : yet that he would be an equally virtuous being, if placed in circumstances that required no such reluctant exertion.

It is undeniable that there may be a species of virtue, visible and pleasing to the Creator, which shall consist in the internal habit of the mind, independent of any outward action ; an equable, unmoved, pious, and pure state of the soul, not shining by victorious exertion against opposition, but admirable for its intrinsic excellence. There is nothing unintelligible in this idea of virtue, though it is rather an object of our conception than of experience. Such is

probably the virtue of beings, higher than ourselves in the scale of creation ; such may be our virtue hereafter, in a purer state, and in a purer world. It is superior in positive excellence to any that we can possibly acquire, because the difficulties and repulses which man encounters in his endeavours towards the perfection which he sets before him, are all so many proofs of his inferiority, and of the weakness of his moral principle.

The Deity however, when he determined to make this stage of existence a passage to another, in which the virtues here cultivated and exhibited should be rewarded, and the contrary habits punished in proportion, had it not in contemplation to create a perfect character, but to discipline an imperfect one. Therefore, he did not place human beings in a state where inherent virtue should be most sublime, but where practical virtue should be most conspicuous, and most properly the subject of reward. But untried virtue is the object of love, esteem, or admira-

tion, rather than of reward ; which being a recompense for good performed, requires, or supposes, that such good should not have been the unavoidable consequence of the circumstances in which the agent was placed, but his voluntary election from various conflicting objects set before him. Virtue, therefore, cannot become justly *rewardable*, till it has been proved equal to trial ; in other words, till it has shown itself capable of enforcing the practice of some duty, or the sacrifice of some inclination, in obedience to certain obligations by which it is bound.

Humble, therefore, as the pretensions of the fairest human virtue must ever be in regard to intrinsic worth, it may, notwithstanding, be more deserving of reward than virtue far superior to it in dignity and stability. Its comparative value is proportioned to the difficulties it has overcome. The intellectual powers of the laborious student may never arrive at the vigour of the lofty genius ; yet though the

mind of superior mould commands the highest admiration, the industrious exertions of the other are the object of more just approbation to the impartial observer of their mutual progress. The Creator is such an observer of the actions of mankind ; and, in appreciating their deserts, will take into consideration their natural powers, opportunities, and difficulties, rather than the positive degree of moral virtue they have attained.

It is certain, at least, that this idea of rewardable virtue falls in with our common and familiar notions. In forming our estimate of merit or demerit, we habitually take into account the circumstances of the agent ; and admire the moderation of Cyrus or the continence of Scipio, more than the privations of a recluse or an anchoret. Justice appears brightest where it has proved superior to opportunities of fraud ; benevolence, where something is resigned by its exercise. The virtue of Adam in Paradise was liable to no trial, except that of obedience to a positive law ; and if that obe-

dience had not been exacted, would have been entitled to no contingent reward.*

* As human life is constituted, it is difficult to find the case of a virtue which is not exposed to actual temptation. But perhaps an instance in point may be taken from the virtue of loyalty, which, in a time of civil union, lies dormant and unregarded ; no man praises another, or values himself for possessing it, as if it were called into daily display, like charity, justice, or temperance. Change the complexion of the times, and loyalty becomes an active virtue ; and no one will deny that it was a virtue of considerable account in the numerous persons, many of them in a very inferior condition, who favoured the concealment and escape of Charles the Second after the battle of Worcester. Independently of all political considerations, it is impossible not to admire the rooted fidelity which was proof against a large reward on one hand, and the dread of the punishment of treason on the other.

What loyalty is in quiet times, such would all virtue be in a state which precluded temptation ; and it approaches nearer to this dormant state, in proportion as the temptations are fewer or less powerful. Introduce the idea of reward and the case becomes still clearer. For, as we should ridicule a subject who demanded any favour of his king in return for his inherent loyalty, or abstract veneration of the monarchical character ; so we should think that loyalty worthy of any reasonable requital which had been evinced in seasons of public commotion, and practised at the expense of pecuniary sacrifice and at the risk of personal danger.

It does not follow from this reasoning, that it is the duty of man to expose his moral constancy to hazard, or that virtue ought to court danger, and place itself in the midst of voluntary temptation. The description here given of rewardable virtue will not even derogate from the merit of those, whatever it may be thought to be, who in various ages have retreated from the seductions of the world, and shut the door against its pleasures. For virtue, though it demands occasions for its exercise, and does not consist in the absence of all temptations to the contrary practice of vice, may very properly consist in the avoiding, as well as in the overcoming, the attractions of vicious pursuits. To retreat beyond the reach of objects which are likely to conquer our principles and resolutions, is actual virtue ; but it supposes the existence of those objects. It has indeed been often alleged as a reproach against a monastic life, that it was excluded from the opportunities of virtue, and sacrificed active duties to passive devotion ; but it should not be forgotten, that a world of temptation

existed without the walls of the monastery, which it was some virtue to avoid.

All the merit, however, which can arise from such a sacrifice, all the train of graceful and benevolent virtues, which have their origin in the various conditions of which human society is composed, and the mutual dependence of these upon each other, are unknown to a state of equality. In exact proportion as you reduce the conditions of mankind to one uniform level, and diminish the number and variety of relations which they bear towards each other, you circumscribe the opportunities of virtue, and narrow the theatre of its exertion. The state of savage life, which, after what has been said in the preceding chapter, I must be allowed to make synonymous with equality, affords little room for that benevolent expansion of the heart, which arises from the exercise of the social affections. The place of those social affections is filled by selfish appetite, and the unsubdued violence of natural feelings; and the moral state is marked by the absence of that gene-

rous affection, which in civilized life springs up within the domestic circle, and, extending from thence to all who are placed within reach of its influence, spreads joy and happiness in every direction.

The connexion, on the contrary, which unites the various ranks of civil society, is peculiarly calculated to call forth all the benevolent, all the social duties, of which the human heart is capable. It is perhaps true, that the first prospect of a country far advanced in civilization, appals us by the vast disproportion observable between the wealth of a few, and the poverty of the many: nor can we rid ourselves of the idea of superfluity and indigence, even when it becomes apparent that these extremes are connected by an almost regular gradation of intermediate fortunes. If mankind had no ulterior destination, and their enjoyment on earth was the sole end and purpose of their being, this disproportion would not only be remarkable if it existed at all, but inexplicable if it existed necessarily. But the case becomes

altogether different, when every situation is considered as being accompanied by its peculiar duty, and forming a separate sphere of probation. The various conditions of human life each require a settled course of action, according to a principle deliberately embraced for the right government of the conduct: and in proportion as the conditions are various, the more room there is for the exercise of virtue, in determining and adhering to the line of duty.

Take, for example, the superfluity of the rich. This is not gratuitously bestowed, but imposes upon them the peculiar duty of judicious expenditure. To determine what excess beyond the natural wants is suitable to an exalted station or an abundant fortune, and what, on the other hand, may be justly condemned as useless and ostentatious luxury, is a question which demands the constant exercise of judgment, and lays a most beneficial restraint upon all the selfish feelings. For, let it not be thought that all superfluities should be pruned

off as luxury, or blamed as vanity : some part of an extensive fortune may be properly employed in encouraging those liberal arts which contribute towards the perfection of man, and in diffusing that wholesome industry which the regular expenditure of the rich spreads in a thousand channels. I hold no concurrence with the unsound axiom, that *vice*, in any case, can be productive of public utility ; but it would argue an unjustifiable austerity to deny that the judicious liberality of the opulent, though not employed on purposes usually termed charitable, is beneficial to a civilized community. The exercise of judicious charity is still more imperative. This demands of the affluent not only a denial of some luxurious vanities, but what is often more reluctantly sacrificed, a portion of their time, and a sound exertion of discriminating judgment. Those stated and uninquiring bounties, which, having their assigned periods, are expected by the receivers as their regular income, and, having no definite object, produce no definite advantage, commonly meet with no other return than in-

gratitude. But much less wealth than is often misapplied in such indiscriminate purposes, or in others of a more useful but equally ostentatious kind, might invigorate drooping industry, might solace patient suffering, and, above all, might widely spread those advantages of education, which, if universally diffused, would prevent one half the miseries and privations we lament in the world. The charity which is often employed to wipe the tear of distress, might, by a more prudent application, stop the source from which it flows.*

* It is interesting to find this clearly recognized by Aristotle, who had seen the consequence of a regular distribution of public bounty at Athens. *“Οπου δ' εἰσὶ πρόσοδοι, δεῖ μὴ ποιεῖν ὃ νῦν οἱ δημαγωγοὶ ποιοῦσι. τὰ γὰρ περιόντα νέμονται. Λαμβάνουσι δὲ ἅμα, καὶ πάλιν δέονται τῶν αὐτῶν. ὁ τετρημένος γὰρ ἐστὶ πῖθος ἢ τοιάντη βοήθεια τοῖς ἀπόροις. Ἄλλὰ δεῖ τὸν ἀληθινῶς δημοτικὸν, ὁρᾶν ὅπως το πλῆθος μὴ λίαν ἄπορον ἦ.* Pol. lib. vi. ch. v. “When revenues superabound, it is now usual with demagogues to divide the surplus among the poor: but this is to pour water into a sieve. A good statesman, instead of occasionally relieving the wants of the poor, who quickly return to be again relieved, will continually strive to better their permanent condition.” To compare Aristotle’s “Politics” with Smith’s Wealth of Nations, is as absurd on

This peculiar exercise, proposed to the active virtue of the rich, springs entirely, let it be observed, from the relative situation in which they are placed by the inequalities of fortune. Destroy that inequality, there is no industry to encourage, no genius to stimulate; a loss indeed that would be of less importance, if it could be added, that no want would require relief, no misery demand alleviation. But they have not studied in the rigid school of experience, who imagine that equality could banish the most poignant distresses of life, or that the greatest misfortunes to which mankind are subject originate in their external circumstances.

It would be a trespass on the province of the moralist, to take more than a cursory view of the duties which their situation more particularly imposes upon the middle and lower ranks of society. In the former of these, a prudential restraint upon the passions stands

the one hand, as it is on the other to deny that it contains a fund of profound and judicious remark on the constitutions of antiquity, though mixed with some fundamental errors.

most prominent, and deserves especial remark, as being totally unknown in those conditions of society where an equal hand supplies alike the thoughtless and the temperate, the frugal and the extravagant. This duty arises out of the rapid growth of population. The difficulty which exists in an old and fully peopled country, of acquiring support in the rank and sphere to which each individual belongs by birth, requires an habitual restraint, and a prudent denial of those inclinations which, in other circumstances of the human race, are only felt to be gratified.* Since the desires which it is

* Should any one be inclined to question the wisdom of a provision which requires this restraint, and allege its frequent infraction as an argument against the dispensation, let him reflect on the state of those countries where the restraint is disregarded, or where there is little occasion for its exercise; as in many parts of the East, and among the Poly-nesi-ans, &c. Their example is a sufficient proof how little is gained, on the score of morality, by the facility of gratification, or the absence of restraint. America is a case still more in point, being generally understood to be the country where marriage takes place earlier, and more easily, than in any other of equal civilization. Yet it is not represented as superior in the virtue of chastity to countries where the multi-

necessary to subject to these checks, are always natural, and sometimes laudable ; and since the evils which attend their gratification are prospective and even distant, while the gratification is itself immediate ; reason has here an occasion of exercising her peculiar province, in keeping the right balance between opposite interests ; and the right use of that province leads to the perfection of those virtues which are the chief ornament and characteristic of man.

It is equally true with respect to the lowest

plication of the species is ten times slower. Among European nations, where the duty of restraint is recognised, the sexual passion is the great touchstone of virtue, and of the efficacy of religion. That it is too often violated, all must lament : that it is observed to a considerable extent, no one can deny ; or that its observance would be more general and easy if proper attention were paid to the subject in education, and if absurd custom had not authorized the habitual use of inflammatory liquors, at an age which by no means requires any such artificial incitement. The Creator has not made the indulgence of any passion obligatory on mankind ; but vicious custom may pervert the intention of nature, and change a necessary provision into a moral poison.

See, on the first part of the subject of this note, Malthus's *Observations*, vol. ii. p. 493.

ranks, that their peculiar circumstances open at once a field both for the trial of their virtue and the improvement of their reason. To see so many around them in the easy and undisturbed possession of what they are themselves incessantly labouring to attain, because their own ancestors have been either less prudent or less fortunate, requires the constant exertion of patient contentment. Their reason is employed meanwhile, in some cases, to point out the advantage of preserving a cheerful equanimity under those hardships which no discontent can remove or alleviate ; and in others, to discover what prospect there may be of meliorating, by successful industry, the difficulties inseparable from the very lowest condition. The struggle to escape this is the constant spur of labour. Reason must teach the foresight which enables a healthy and vigorous youth to provide against the infirmities of age ; and by which a father points out to his children the path in which they may tread the rough road of life with fewest obstacles, and the fairest prospect of success. By this right application of the rational faculties,

poverty may be rendered tolerable, and indigence avoided. These conditions, it must be ever remembered, are essentially distinct and separate. Poverty is often both honourable and comfortable ; but indigence can only be pitiable, and is usually contemptible. Poverty is not only the natural lot of many, in a well-constituted society, but is necessary, that a society may be well constituted. Indigence, on the contrary, is seldom the natural lot of any, but is commonly the state into which intemperance and want of prudent foresight push poverty : the punishment which the moral government of God inflicts in this world upon thoughtlessness and guilty extravagance. It is one of the moral advantages of civil society, that every condition has a tendency to sink into the degree immediately below it, unless that tendency is counteracted by prudence and activity ; and the descent, which from the higher ranks becomes degradation, from the lower becomes indigence.

From the collected aggregate of these various duties, results that mutual dependence and

connexion, which is the bond of society. The labour of the lowest class, which feeds the superfluities of the highest, like the vapour which has been drawn from the earth, descends again in a thousand channels, and fertilizes the soil into which it falls. There are persons, it must be confessed, who, in such a constitution of things, can see only “a spirit of oppression, a spirit of servility, and a spirit of fraud ;” and, in truth, among the infinite varieties and corruptions of the human mind, some will doubtless find an occasion of falling, where others find an occasion of virtue. But it may be maintained, that, exclusive of the particular duties which this scheme of society renders incumbent on each individual, and every class of individuals, the general spirit of dependence, the general connexion, not necessary but voluntary, is highly favourable to that benevolence which was truly said to approximate mankind nearest to the divine nature. There is little in the situation of man, which can make us select independence as most congenial to him. For his original and his continued existence, he is indebted to his

Creator. For the real comforts and happiness of his life, he must be indebted to his fellow-creatures. All those who, in the crowded scene of civilization, are mainly employed in pursuing their own advantage, can only attain their end, by promoting collaterally the happiness of their neighbour. The confidence, the reciprocal kindness, the intercourse which arises from this connexion, is surely as amiable as that proud independence which has been recommended as the chief advantage resulting from an equality of ranks and possessions.

Let us examine the case before appealed to, and conceive a division of property like that in Peru. "The largest share of the lands was reserved for the maintenance of the people, among whom it was parcelled out. They possessed it, however, only for a year; at the expiration of which, a new division was made in proportion to the rank, the number, and exigencies of each family. All these lands were cultivated by the joint industry of the community. The people, summoned by proper

officers, repaired in a body to the fields, and performing their common task, while songs and musical instruments cheered them to their labour.”*

There is something, it must be confessed, in this description, so unlike the unwilling toil and incessant drudgery we see around us, that a sanguine mind must imperceptibly be seduced by its fascination. That the concerns of an extensive community cannot be regulated in this manner, and were not even in Peru, has been already shown, by an examination of particulars; and the progress of population makes it evident, that the long duration of such a state of

* Robertson's *America*, iii. 339.

So, among the Negroes on the banks of the river Gambia, the seed-time is a period of much festivity. “Those who belong to the same village unite in cultivating the ground, and the chief appears at their head, armed as if he were going out to battle, and surrounded by a band of musicians, who, by singing and playing upon musical instruments, endeavour to encourage the labourers. The chief frequently joins in the music; and the workmen accompany their labour with a variety of ridiculous gestures and grimaces, according to the different tunes with which they are entertained.” Millar, *Orig. of Ranks*, 159.

things is absolutely inconsistent with the economy on which the world is constituted, unless that obstacle is provided against by some artificial expedients. But laying aside for a moment these considerations : to a degree how inferior, when compared with his present dignity and station, would man be lowered, when reduced to a situation so regular and mechanical !

Virtue, as it has been truly and frequently remarked, is not more seen or tried in high and splendid situations, than in the every-day occurrences of quiet and tranquil life ;* since that obedience to given rules, on which virtue depends, is no less necessary in a humble, than in an exalted sphere. But this remark does not apply to the sameness of a life such as has been here described, where the faculties have no excitement, where half the passions would lie dormant, and that noblest virtue which consists

* Arist, Eth. x. 8. *Οἱ ἰδιῶται τῶν δυναστῶν οὐχ ἥττον δοκοῦσι τὰ ἐπικειῆ πράττειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ μᾶλλον. ἰκανὸν δὲ τοιαῦθ' εὑρίσκειν. ἔστι γὰρ ὁ βίος εὐδαίμων, τοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν ἐνεργούντος. et seqq.*

in the moderation and right direction of them, must want all opportunity of exercise. The real fact is, that such equality would sink the general standard of morality, first, by rendering stagnant the human faculties, and secondly, by cutting off the existence of exalted characters.

It is by observation of the actions of mankind in various situations, and of their effect upon the character of the actors and the happiness of others, that the leading rules of morality are discovered and laid down. Whether virtue be defined to consist in the suitableness of the affections to their objects, in the conformity of the actions to the truth or fitness of things, or in a benevolent regard to general utility and expediency,* questions which have

* I would not be understood to give any of these as definitions of *Christian virtue*. It is so evident, that the same definition of virtue will not be applicable to persons who have, and who have not, the advantage of Revelation, that it is surprising so much fruitless pains should have been taken to bring both situations under the same rule. If asked what has been my view of virtue in this chapter, I should say, that, considered as a settled principle of action,

afforded an advantageous employment to reason in various ages ; it can certainly only be judged of in situations admitting the various relations of society, and displaying the effects of their various duties. This is the field where intellect should expatiate, and these are the situations where, in fact, the brightest ornaments of humanity have successively appeared and shone. If we trace the progress of morals from Confucius to Socrates, and from Cicero to the present day, all who have formed the truest judgment and delivered the justest rules of action have lived in a state where the distinction of ranks was most marked, and every variety of condition visible.*

it consisted in the being influenced by right motives to the attainment of a right end, according to the degree of light enjoyed by the agent. In proportion as the right end is perceived and the right motives are understood, human virtue becomes more or less perfect. Therefore intelligence is absolutely necessary to the higher degrees of virtue.

* This observation is confirmed by what has been before remarked of the ancient Greeks, that they were first *natural*, then *moral*, and last of all *political* philosophers.

Ferguson has observed, speaking of Rome, under the

Even if the opportunities of moral observation, indispensably necessary to enlarge the views and comprehension of the moralist, could be supposed compatible with equality; still, the mind to observe, and to reduce observations to practice, would be wanting. Any state of society, which does not admit and provide for literary leisure, is inconsistent with the due culture and proper discipline of the mind. In Peru, or a state like that of Peru, Socrates would have studied husbandry, and Solon have regulated the plough. Such employments are compatible with active, but not with contemplative exertion. Generals, if antiquity is to be believed, have been summoned from the field; but no philosophers.

On the whole, we may be allowed to conclude, that if it had been possible, according

emperors, "The civil law received from the consultations of lawyers, the decisions of judges, and the edicts of princes, continual accessions of light and authority, which has rendered it the great basis of independence to all the modern nations of Europe." R. R. v. 416.

to the established system of the universe, for mankind to have continued equal in their fortunes and conditions, the same equality would have extended to their minds. The consequence would have been a general inferiority of the rational faculties. The existence of high practical rules raises the general standard of morality ; because, even if few attain the summit, all are tending, more or less, towards it. But those lights of the world, which have occasionally appeared, and have established, from collected observations, the most useful rules of conduct, and the sublimest morality, would have been extinct. Extinguish then these lights, annihilate these general rules, diminish at the same time the temptations to vice and the opportunities of virtue, the advantage is doubtful, the evil certain. Experience does not acquaint us, that even the vices would be less gross or numerous ; but it is undeniable that the approved virtues would be both of a lower standard, and of rarer occurrence. Variety of condition enlarges the sphere of active duty ; and every circumstance that enlarges

the sphere of duty, contributes towards the perfection of a being, whose distinguishing faculty is obedience to reason, and whose most valuable quality is a power of moral and intellectual improvement commensurate with his individual situation.

CHAPTER V.

On the Principle of Population, and its Effects : intended to show that Man is inevitably placed in that Condition which is most calculated to improve his Faculties, and afford Opportunities for the exercise of Virtue.

I AM willing to suppose it has appeared from the foregoing discussion, that a state of society, consisting of various ranks and conditions, is the state best suited to excite the industry and display the most valuable faculties of mankind. Taking, therefore, into consideration the object of man's existence upon earth, it might naturally be expected that the Creator would devise a mean which would inevitably tend to bring the human race, for the most part, into such a situation.

And this, in fact, I believe to be the final cause of that "principle of population," with whose powerful agency we have recently been made acquainted; the final cause, in other words, of that instinctive propensity in human nature, under all governments, and in every stage of civilization, to multiply up to the means of subsistence, and even to press, by increase of numbers, upon the limits of the food assigned them. The consequence of this universal tendency is, to render an inequality of fortunes, and a consequent division of ranks, no less general; not as a matter of agreement or expediency in which mankind have a liberty of option; but as a matter of imperious necessity, growing out of the established constitution of their nature.

The existence of this principle was first remarked by political economists in the concluding half of the last century, and allusions to it may be found in the writings of Wallace, Hume, Franklin, Smith, and particularly of Mr. Townsend, who in the course of his travels

through Spain had an opportunity of illustrating its influence and effects in every valley and opening of the mountains, many of which in that country are in a manner insulated from the rest of the world. The human race, he observes, however at first, and while their numbers are limited, they may rejoice in affluence, will go on increasing, till they balance their quantity of food. From that period, two appetites will combine to regulate their numbers. But the merit of establishing the fact, that, notwithstanding the checks to population, both from natural and moral causes, which exist, more or less, in every country, mankind *do* every where increase their numbers, till their multiplication is restrained by the difficulty of procuring subsistence, and the consequent poverty of some part of the society: this merit is justly due to the comprehensive treatise, in which Mr. Malthus has unfolded this important branch of human history. The work to which I allude, is too well known to justify any abridgment of its leading doctrines, and too

well digested to allow any material addition to its statements.*

* I would be understood to speak here of the facts established by Mr. Malthus, as to the different ratio of increase of mankind and their support ; in saying which, I do not allude to the arithmetical and geometrical ratios, as if they were established laws of nature, but to the universal tendency of the species to increase faster than subsistence can be supplied. With the hypothetical ratios which open the subject in Mr. Malthus's work, I have no immediate concern. Even though as abstract facts they may be undeniable, the general argument of Mr. Malthus is independent of them : and the propositions he brings forward would stand as well even if the introductory statement could be overthrown. Whatever exceptions may be urged against the mode in which Mr. Malthus has introduced his arguments, or to some of the particular consequences he has deduced from them, on which, of course, even the surest premises leave just room for difference of opinion ; it is impossible to rise from his treatise without a conviction, that there is a tendency in mankind under all known circumstances, to pass the limits of their actual supply. It may, however, naturally be asked, how a treatise, which admits the justice of Mr. Malthus's premises, and even takes them as a basis, should represent the effects of the principle of population upon mankind, under such a different aspect ? This will admit of very satisfactory explanation. It was the object of Mr. M. to show the strength of that principle. Its strength was to be proved by a circumstantial detail of the checks which retard or diminish popula-

The fact stands thus. An instinctive principle in our nature, forcibly urgent, wherever it meets with no discouragement from the difficulty of providing for a family, mutually attaches the sexes to each other. Where this desired and desirable union is unrestrained, and

tion in every country of the world, notwithstanding and in spite of which, no country has actually any food to spare. Those checks are, moral restraint, vice, and misery. Of these three, moral restraint, i. e. restraint upon marriage from prudential considerations, is incalculably the most universal and effectual, and is distinctly stated as such by Mr. M. vol. ii. p. 75. But it is a silent and an unseen check, and, comparatively, makes no figure in the account; whereas the vices and the natural evils to which mankind are liable, wear a tremendous appearance when collected into a small space to prove a particular point. That there was much poverty, much vice, much misery in the world, was well known before; but it was lost in the more evident appearance of industry, plenty, and content, till all the checks to population were brought together in the aggregate, to point out to us the vigorous operation of the law of increase. For this reason, Mr. Malthus's first volume, though none of its main facts can be disproved, is not to be taken as a representation of the actual state of human nature, but of the disorders to which it is liable. The human constitution is not to be judged of from a system of nosology; nor the state of society in England from Mr. Colquhoun's View of the Police of the Metropolis.

its offspring subject to no premature mortality, the increase which attends it is so rapid, as to double the original population in twelve or fifteen years. And, not to insist upon extreme cases, the increase in countries to a certain degree civilized and widely extended, is known to proceed in a geometrical ratio, i. e. to double the population in twenty-five years, as long as it continues possible, by the employment of skill and labour on a surface of unoccupied land, to find a plentiful subsistence for this growing population.

This tendency to multiplication has long ago so far filled the greater part of the habitable globe, that very few spots remain where it has still room to exert and expand itself. But as the instinct no where ceases, till it meets with its natural check from the diminished supply of food, there is no country, either civilized or uncivilized, where its force does not intrude itself on our observation. This fact is manifested by the difficulty and distress, to which it is notorious that every state of society, except

the first possessors of uncleared countries, is reduced in order to procure subsistence for some of its members. It arises from the activity of the principle, which, as long as it remains unchecked, as in America, and to a considerable degree in some parts of the Russian empire, so quickly doubles the population, that in old and fully peopled countries the population is still constantly pressing against the means of support, and labouring to increase, by every possible mode, the quantity of food which the country affords.

A survey of the different conditions in which we find mankind collected; whether the hunting state, the pastoral, the agricultural, or the commercial; will satisfactorily prove, that by a principle inherent in their constitution, mankind invariably press against, and have a tendency to surpass their actual and available supply of food.

It would appear that in the hunting countries, though they are so thinly peopled, that a tra-

veller may go many hundred miles without meeting half a dozen persons, the distresses which are occasionally suffered from hunger are incredible. Mr. Hearne, after describing some in which he was so unfortunate as to participate, desires that these may be considered as no more than the common occurrences of an Indian life, in which they are frequently driven to the necessity of eating one another.*

It would appear, that in the immense districts of Asiatic Russia, Turkey, and the inhabited parts of Africa, we find the same truth universally meeting us. In security of property, arising from vicious government at home, and from the perpetual risk of foreign incursions, spreads an unnatural sterility over the most fertile countries of the world. Yet it is an undeniable fact, that the people, under every

* Quoted by Mr. Weyland, in his volume on Population and Production, p. 34. It is necessary to remark here, that the cause of these evils is not over-population, but want of regular industry. The fact really proved is, that there is no country where the demand for food is below the supply.

circumstance of discouragement, rudely press against the limits of their actual subsistence. Even countries so peculiarly situated as North America, and the newly settled districts of Russia, do not furnish an exception to the general rule: the pressure, of course, is less severe; population only reaches the available supply, without passing it; but still it reaches those bounds; there is nothing to spare.

With regard to the more crowded commercial countries of Europe, the most advanced we know in point of absolute civilization, we have only to look around us in order to be satisfied whether the people do not increase up to the means of support; i. e. whether those who have no other maintenance than the daily wages of their labour, do not increase till that labour earns barely sufficient to support their families. The result of such observation cannot fail to be, that in every department of national industry there are more claimants for employ than employers; that the demand is for labour rather than for labourers; that there are somewhat

more manufacturers, more artificers, more agriculturists, than can be usefully or profitably, under the existing circumstances, kept in activity by the funds destined for their maintenance. And as labour is the only claim to support which the lowest classes can urge ; to be without employ, is to be without support ; and to multiply beyond the demand for labour, is to multiply beyond the available supply of subsistence.

While every new discovery acquaints us that this principle is not partial in its influence, we learn from history that it has always operated, and produced the same effect. The invasion of Egypt by the shepherd kings, for whose increase their original limits had become insufficient, took place within three hundred years of the deluge, and shows how rapidly the most desirable part of the East had been occupied.*

* The other accounts we possess of this period tend to the same conclusion. The partition of countries, a hundred years after the flood, was of course dictated by expediency, if not by absolute necessity. The dispersion from Babel followed at the distance of a hundred and fifty years, and it

The numerous migrations from the maritime states of Asia and ancient Greece, show the constant tendency of the parent countries to multiply beyond the means of comfortable subsistence. Neither the fertility nor the barrenness of any region seems to prevent the same cause from ending in the same result. Even in the abundant climate of the South Sea Is-

was soon after that event, that the invasion alluded to in the text happened, by part of the family of Ham, who, according to Manetho, took possession of Memphis, under the title of Auritæ, or shepherds. See Bryant, *Ant. Myth.* vol. i. How much light is thrown upon history by the exposition of the principle of population, appears from the following passage of Mr. Mitford: "Mankind, according to the most ancient of historians, considerably informed and polished, but inhabiting yet only a small portion of the earth, was inspired generally with a spirit of migration. What gave at the time peculiar energy to that spirit, which seems always to have existed extensively among men, commentators have indeed, with bold absurdity, undertaken to explain; but the historian himself has evidently intended only general, and that now become obscure information. All history, however, proves that such a spirit has operated over the far greater part of the globe; and we know that it has never yet ceased to actuate, in a greater or less degree, a large portion of mankind." *Hist. of Greece*, vol. i. sect. 1.

lands, the pressure of famine is not unknown ; and “ the hungry season, or time of scarcity,” is familiarly spoken of by those who have resided there. The same is true even of the more genial districts of South America.* In climates the most opposite to these, as for instance, those of Lapland or New Zealand, any deviation from the usual course of the seasons brings upon the inhabitants as sensible a distress from scarcity, as the crowded kingdoms of China or Hindostan sustain by the failure of their crops of rice, and the deficiencies of the public granaries.

Such then is the established fact, that, according to the attachments and instincts of our common nature, the human race continues to increase, till the population presses upon the actual supply of food ; so that there will always be in every inhabited country as many persons existing as it will support at all, and always more than it can support well. And having merely stated this undeniable truth, it becomes

* Humboldt's *New Spain*, vol. 1.

my object more particularly to consider its effects upon the moral and political state of mankind.

I. The primary result of this universal tendency to increase, is the division of property. The property of first necessity to every man, is his supply of food. Whilst this is plentiful, he is careless about it. Its value originates with its scarcity. If the fruits of the earth were supplied from a source as regular and inexhaustible as the water of the ocean, there could be no occasion, and there would, probably, be no thought, of their appropriation. If every family, like the Israelites in the wilderness, could supply their wants without the necessity of labour or the fear of deficiency, no one would think of setting bounds to the demand of any claimant, or grudge his neighbour his share of the superabundance.

By the constitution of things, however, it appears, that abundance, even if it exists for a while, can never be of long duration. It de-

feats itself. Wherever it is found, the number of claimants is daily increasing in proportion, and will soon require an addition to the supply of food, which can only be procured by labour ; and as soon as it demands labour, becomes valuable.*

* I need hardly observe, that I do not state this as the mode in which we have been uniformly led to the division of property ; the case is only put hypothetically, to prove that even under the most favourable circumstances the pressure of population would soon either render such division inevitable, or leave the inhabitants in the most wretched and stationary condition, if they refused to comply with the intentions of Providence for their comfort and improvement.

The hypothesis, however, has so much justification in fact, that it is very nearly a representation of the case of Abraham and Lot. “ The land was not able to bear them, “ that they might dwell together ; for their substance was “ great, so that they could not dwell together. And there “ was a strife between the herdmen of Abraham’s cattle, and “ the herdmen of Lot’s cattle. And Abraham said unto Lot, “ Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, “ and between my herdmen and thy herdmen ; for we are “ brethren. Is not the whole land before thee ? separate “ thyself, I pray thee, from me ; and if thou wilt take the “ left hand, then I will go to the right hand ; or if thou de- “ part to the right hand, then I will go to the left. Thus “ Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan ; and Lot journeyed

Let us suppose, for example, a couple in the situation of the first created man and woman, having the world all open before them. Here the idea of scarcity seems entirely precluded. Let them take possession of a district, consisting of 200,000 acres, which, according to the average power and cultivation of land in Great Britain, would support 100,000 persons.* Reckon twelve persons at the end of the first twenty years; who, under such favourable cir-

“east, and they separated themselves one from another.”
(Gen. xiii.)

A more recent example is given by Mr. Elphinstone, in his Account of Cabul. The tribe of Kharotics in Afghaunistaun, are so closely hemmed in by mountains, that they are unable to extend their cultivation. According to the Mahometan laws, the lands of each person were divided among his sons. The gradual increase of population, therefore, showed itself in this, that each man's portion became regularly less and less, till it was soon too small to maintain a man.” In consequence, upwards of 300 families had renounced their share of the land, and become thorough wanderers. Elph. Cabul, 447.

* Weyland on Poor Laws, p. 273. This is the average of a high state of cultivation, though not of the highest possible. People would certainly emigrate, before they endeavoured to make their land more productive than it is in England.

cumstances, would certainly, taking one period with another, multiply according to the quickest known increase of the species, and double their number every fifteen years.* Within a hundred and forty years from the creation, these eight persons would have above 3000 descendants; which in sixty years more, would ascend to 49,152. One generation farther would give us 98,304 persons, and carries us already as far as the point to which population can possibly go, the point of subsistence.

It is evident that in the later stages of this increase, food, however plentiful at first, would become scarce, and the object of eager demand. It is evident too, that at last, the only resource would be to increase the supply of food by the emigration of part of the society,

* “According to a table of Euler, calculated on a mortality of 1 in 36, if the births be to the deaths in the proportion of 3 to 1, the period of doubling will be only $12\frac{4}{5}$ years. In the back settlements of America, the population has been found to double itself in fifteen years. Sir Wm. Petty supposes a doubling possible in so short a time as ten years.” Malthus, i. 7.

or to diminish the demand for it at home by laying a restraint upon the natural desires.

In the case of an unoccupied world, with the prospect of plenty on the opposite side of a river, or across the chain of hills which bounded the district, there is no doubt which alternative would be chosen. Before, however, men consented to leave the spot of their nativity, and to try the fortune of fresh cultivation, they would certainly argue, that what could not be possessed without a sacrifice, or obtained without labour, must belong to each person, according to the labour he was able or willing to employ.* It is true, that, while the common store was always full, it was of little consequence whether ten shares were subtracted from it, or one; but since the demand had now become greater

* Even if it should be thought, that at first, while emigration were so easy, the division of property might possibly not precede it, that consequence must at all events ensue as soon as emigration became difficult, which in the course of nature, as here described, it would soon become.

than could be supplied, it was unreasonable that one person with a numerous family should draw upon the common stock for ten times as large a portion, as another who contributed an equal share of labour. It would be required, therefore, as the only remedy of this inequality, that those who had the advantage of mutual attachment and affectionate children, should pay the price of that advantage; which they would do, as soon as each family provided for its own support.

The immediate resource is at hand, to divide the lands belonging to the society between the existing families: and this resource would be applied to, as soon as the first pressure of scarcity was sensibly felt, and produced disputes as to the equal rights of contending claimants. Such a change in the circumstances of a society may be easily understood, by supposing a parallel case in the article of water; which being in many countries of the world inexhaustibly abundant, is common property: but ceases to be so, as soon as the supply

requires to be increased by expense or labour. It is easy to imagine the water of a well which had been commonly resorted to for the consumption of a village, so far to fail, that it should be necessary to raise by labour what was requisite for the daily expenditure. As long as the well poured forth its supply spontaneously, no one thought of limiting, or even observing, what his neighbour drew from it. But when circumstances are altered, will the inhabitants of the village unite their common labour to fill a reservoir, to which all shall have an equal claim? Some one will soon argue, I require a single gallon, and my neighbour twenty, for daily consumption: it is not reasonable that I should contribute twenty times as much labour as I receive in return: the well is amongst us all; but let each draw his own supply.

If we merely change the terms, the consequence of a division of territory upon the first scarcity of subsistence is evident: the common territory is the common well, and cultivation is the labour it requires.

Here then, from the time when the claimants for food pressed against the supply, not of the whole world, but of the district they had first peopled, we have the date of the *recognition of property*, resulting from the necessities imposed upon man by the constitution of things : and in the recognition of property we have the point, as was before observed, from which industry, arts and civilization set out. Human nature, if we judge from experience, requires that the individual should be satisfied that the effects of his personal exertion should contribute to his personal comfort. According as he is more or less assured of this, he is more or less active and laborious. Look at the degrees of industry in different countries : the variation is uniformly true to this principle. Where property is recognized, but insecure, as in countries where the police is deficient, though the effect of labour is more evident than when its produce is carried to a common store, still, as its advantage is uncertain, the individual is less disposed to exertion than the inhabitant of a well-regulated community.

Again, where the government is regular, but the despotism severe, there will be much humble industry, but little accumulation of property; it is worth while to enjoy, but not to lay up what will soon become an object of rapacity. In every case, the exertion bears a close proportion to the visible and certain advantage it produces. This advantage is never less visible, than when labour contributes to a common store.

The step, therefore, immediately following the first distress for food, is the determination that each family should support itself, and each individual enjoy the fruits of his own labour. And since it is an acknowledged truth, that, according to the nature of things, the supply of food can only be increased at a much slower rate than an unchecked population will multiply,*

* In an anonymous pamphlet lately published at Paris, which professes to exhibit "*les vraies causes de la misère et de la félicité publiques*," the author, who calls himself "*un ancien administrateur*," repeats with great parade the old objection against Mr. Malthus's reasoning, viz. that population cannot be said to increase faster than subsistence, as

there is every reason to suppose that in all ages and countries a very short period, even

long as there is any unsettled land in the world. The fact, however, of the *natural ratio of increase*, is not affected by pointing out spots in the universe where *there are no inhabitants to multiply*. The only just mode of calculating on this subject, is that adopted by Mr. M., viz. to set the possible population of any given country, supposing the principle unchecked, against the possible domestic supply. Mr. M. does not deny that the redundant population in one district may be transferred to another; he only shows, that, where increase is unchecked, there will be a redundant population. We may safely grant, therefore, that, “il n’y a d’autres limites pour la production des subsistances destinées aux peuples répandus sur le globe, que celles du globe même, et de l’industrie humaine qui en fertilise le sol.” (P. 12.) But it is equally true, that nothing except actual want in one country leads human industry to reclaim another. Man does not voluntarily leave his native soil. Necessity is the agent which enforces emigration.

From the unfeeling mode in which emigration is sometimes proposed as a remedy for all the evils of indigence, one might imagine that it was as easy to cross the Atlantic and stock a farm in Louisiana or Kentucky, as for Adam or Noah to find a settlement. What does it signify to the thousands who may be thrown out of employ by sudden changes of political affairs, or the sudden depreciation of agricultural produce in this the best regulated and richest country of the world; what does it signify that there are millions of acres of unoc-

shorter than that supposed in the preceding calculation, has been suffered to elapse, before the expediency had been seen of dividing the occupied lands among the existing families. For it can hardly be thought that the few tribes which still afford an example of a general stock, furnish a material exception to the division here represented as arising necessarily from the law of nature. Most of these tribes depend principally, if not entirely, for their support, on the produce of the chase. The chase requires the co-operation of numbers: and it is obviously

occupied land in the universe, ready to repay their labour with abundance? They may too justly exclaim with the poet,

O quis nos gelidis in vallibus Hæmi

Sistat, et ingenti ramorum protegat umbra !

Is there a capital to support them till that land is reclaimed? Is there a fleet in port, ready to carry them gratuitously to their Eldorado? The expedition which proved fatal to Raleigh was not half so rash or cruel, as the project of encouraging population with a view to emigration, without providing at the same time that this resource should be easy and uniform.

This is not meant to argue that England is over-peopled, but only to show that it is vain and fallacious to talk of emigration as a ready and simple cure for the evils of poverty or scarcity.

natural, that what has been acquired by the united labour of the tribe, should be laid up for equal distribution. It is indispensable too, that where the people depended upon the comparatively regular returns of agriculture, the necessity of appropriation and division would be soonest perceived. It is a matter of easy calculation, how much corn a certain portion of land will produce, and how many persons a certain quantity of corn will support. But the supply derived from fishing or the chase being irregular and variable, there are no data afforded for a certain calculation, which might point out the necessity of imposing the burden of providing for his own and his family's wants upon each individual.

II. The first effect, it has appeared, of the natural law which uniformly presses the population against the means of subsistence, is the *division of property*. Its second effect, springing inevitably from the former, is the division of ranks. To explain the process by which this result is produced, we will return to the

district which we left a few pages ago, in want of subsistence for its redundant population, and resorting to the first and most obvious means of remedying the evil. Let us suppose then, that forty or fifty families from this over-peopled society, shall emigrate into a new and uncultivated tract of country, all hitherto equal and independent ; but taught by experience to agree that each family should provide for its own wants, and enjoy the produce of its own industry.

These free settlers, entering upon their new world, and dividing their territory into equal shares, proceed to cultivate it with equal zeal, but by no means with equal success. One man, whose strength and vigour enable him to prosecute his work unremittingly, prospers in his undertaking, and reclaims a quantity of land not only sufficient to supply his own wants, but to afford an overplus. Even if his family increases, his children, as they grow up, add so much labour to the common stock, that the surplus above all their wants increases gradu-

ally with their strength and skill, till they are enabled to support a second family in addition to their own. In the natural course of things, however, others must prove less fortunate. One is cut off by sickness, and leaves his children dependent upon the care of friends.* Another is deprived by some accident of the power to use his tools, till the season of cropping the ground is past: it follows, that he must be fed by the more successful labour of his companions.

But it cannot be expected that the produce of their labour should be long imparted gra-

* The first colonists from this country to America underwent hardships and misfortunes which fatally realize this description. A company of Puritans, who laid the foundation of the New England colonies, arrived at Cape Cod in November 1620, one hundred and twenty in number, divided into nineteen families. Each family had an allotment of land for lodging and gardens, in proportion to the number of persons it contained; and, to prevent disputes, the situation of each family was chosen by lot. Within two or three months half of the company was dead. Neal's History of the Puritans, vol. ii. p. 121. See also Hume's Appendix to James I.

tuitously; for there is no superfluous food: even this small society is gradually increasing as fast as this supply increases, and the produce of each year finds claimants equal to its amount; claimants who can only be satisfied by adding to the labour, in proportion to the demand. The man, therefore, who has nothing else to offer, exchanges the prospect of his future labours when his strength shall be recovered, for sustenance during his present distress; an agreement which is quickly made with the more fortunate cultivator whose industry has returned him a surplus. But the additional labour thus supplied, enables our first adventurer to turn up more soil, or to till the rest more skilfully. The gradual increase of his surplus produce, according to the known return of agricultural labour, makes him speedily celebrated in the colony as one to whom all may resort, whose efforts have been unsuccessful, or whom the evils incident to humanity have cut off from exertion; as one from whom they may receive immediate support, in return

for the labour they can give, or engage to give, in exchange.*

Hitherto, let it be observed, only those casualties of illness or death to which all alike are subject, have been mentioned as the causes

* “When a people have emerged ever so little from a savage state, and *their numbers have increased beyond the original multitude, there must immediately arise an inequality of property*; and while some possess large tracts of land, others are confined within narrow limits, and some are entirely without any landed property. Those who possess more, land than they can labour, employ those who possess none, and agree to receive a determinate part of the product.” Hume, Essay iv. This inequality is not confined to the case of agriculturists alone. Pastoral nations are subject to the same laws. “The wealth they enjoy in their herds and flocks is distributed in various proportions, *according to the industry or good fortune of different individuals*; and those who are poor become dependent on those who are rich, who are capable of relieving their necessities, and affording them subsistence. As the pre-eminence and superior abilities of the chief are naturally exerted in the acquisition of that wealth which is then introduced, he becomes of course the richest man in the society; and his influence is rendered proportionally more extensive. According to the estate he has accumulated, he is exalted to a higher rank, lives in greater magnificence, and keeps a more numerous train of servants and retainers.” Millar on the Origin of Ranks, p. 152.

of inequality. But there are moral differences in the characters of men, which would tend to hasten the same result. All have not equal skill; all have not equally patient industry. Many would resign their apportioned share, instead of bartering their labour for subsistence: and thus, by beggaring themselves, and augmenting the superfluity of their wiser neighbours, would quicken the effect which the course of nature was producing by slow degrees. So that it is no hypothetical conclusion, but consistent with the habits and disposition of mankind, to affirm, that in less than a century the land originally parted among fifty families, would be possessed by twenty in very unequal shares: upon whose return for their labour, exerted in various ways, the posterity of the original settlers, and the rest of the increased colony, must be dependent for their annual support.*

* “ Rome, like most other of the ancient republics, was originally founded upon an agrarian law, which divided the public territory in a certain proportion among the different citizens who composed the state. The course of human

It is unnecessary to proceed farther. On a small and confined scale, this is a history of the subordination of ranks ; and, in many actual cases, the mode in which we know it has proceeded. In this manner, as we learn from history, Ionia, and southern Italy, and all the shores of the Mediterranean which afforded a practicable opening, were peopled with the overflowings of the Grecian states ; and in this manner the conquered countries of Italy were

affairs, by marriage, by succession, and by alienation, necessarily deranged this original division, and threw the lands, which had been allotted for the maintenance of many different families, into the possession of a single person." Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, vol. ii. It is worth observing here, that if equality could have subsisted any where together with the division of property, it would have subsisted at Rome. Romulus and his successors not only divided equally the lands of the state, but they enacted such laws respecting succession, that the marriage of the female into another family should not cause alienation. Neither was it allowed to make a will, except in the public assembly, before the promulgation of the twelve tables. By these rules equality was preserved at Rome much beyond its natural period. Montesqu. l. xxvii. So at Athens it was not allowable to bequeath money out of the family before Solon's time. See Plutarch, *Life of Solon*, i. p. 196, ed. Br.

afterwards replenished with settlers from Rome. The colonists of North America are of more recent experience ; and the very case here supposed has an example in the settlers in Prince Edward's Island under Lord Selkirk's direction, where each man had a portion of land assigned him, according to his own strength and that of his family. These and other emigrators have been subject to no other regulations than the division of lands by an agrarian law. The only inequality they have set out with, has been that which the constitution of nature has established between different men ; which produces the effect in question, by acting in conjunction with that primary law of Providence by which it is ordained, that subsistence shall universally become the object of eager competition.

In some cases, as we know, attempts have been made to resist this constitution of nature, and obviate its effects. The early Roman kings, when they apportioned settlements among their citizens, adopted peculiar precautions to pre-

vent alienation.* One of the modes by which this is effected, in the usual course of nature, is the failure of male heirs. It was originally, however, enacted at Rome, that the marriage of the female into another family should not be followed by an eventual alienation of the paternal inheritance. On a similar principle, in some of the provinces of North America, the rights of primogeniture were either annulled or curtailed. These attempts have all, eventually, proved fruitless.

Indeed, had it been possible, compatibly with the law of increase, † to preserve an

* "Si lorsque le législateur fait un pareil partage (des terres) il ne donne pas des loix pour le maintenir, il ne fait qu'une constitution passagère; l'inégalité entrera par le côté que les loix n'auront pas défendu, et la république sera perdue." Mont. l. v. chap. 6. Experience, however, must have proved to Montesquieu's satisfaction, that no law *could bar out* inequality, which has always found some quarter undefended.

† Under the Jewish theocracy, an express provision was seen to be necessary, in order to counteract the natural tendency of fortunes towards inequality. In that government it was desired to preserve, as nearly as possible, the same

equality of condition throughout a community, it would have been universal among the ancient republics. It was the great ambition of most of their legislators, and no measures were left untried to accomplish it. Phaleas, for example, proposed the equalization of fortunes at Chalcedon, as a most salutary institution, easily established in new settlements, and which, he thought, might be introduced into old countries by one simple law, commanding the rich always to give portions with their daughters, but never to receive any; and the poor always to receive, but never to give them.* In legislating for Athens, Solon had

balance between the tribes, the heads of families of the same tribes. Since, however, it was foreseen that this was contrary to the usual course of things, and that inequality would soon disturb this peculiar provision, it was especially ordained that a release of all debts and servitudes should take place every seventh year. It was still farther provided by the law of jubilee, that every 50th year, all alienated lands should be restored, and the estate of every family, being cleared from all incumbrances, should return to the family again. Deut. xv. Lev. xxv. See Lowman, chap. 4. An exception established by such forcible measures is the strongest confirmation of the general law.

* Arist. de Rep. l. ii. chap. 7.

the same object in view.* The early institutions of several states both limited the acquisition, and prohibited, under certain circumstances, the sale of lands. In Locris, a citizen was not allowed to dispose of his estate, unless he could make it appear that he was reduced to this necessity by some unmerited and manifest calamity. Philolaus, at Thebes, proposed some peculiar laws relating to the adoption of children, which had in view the perpetuating the original divisions of the territory.† In some states it was a law, that no individual should possess above a certain measure of

* “Solon allowed a brother to marry his sister on the father’s side, but not his sister uterine; because, by marrying the latter, he might have increased the estate which descended to him from his father, by that which came from the first husband of his mother, and thus, in his own person, have accumulated two inheritances. Several other of Solon’s laws breathe the same spirit.” Gillies on Arist. Polit. p. 92. See also Montesquieu, l. v. chap. 5.

† The original here only shows, that the subject required regulation, without acquainting us with its precise nature: Νομοθέτης αὐτοῖς (Θηβαίοις) ἐγένετο Φιλόλαος, περὶ τ’ ἄλλων τινῶν, καὶ περὶ τῆς παιδοποιᾶς, οὗς καλοῦσιν ἐκεῖνοι νόμους θετικούς. Καὶ τοῦτ’ ἔστιν ἰδίως ὑπ’ ἐκείνου νενομοθετημένον, ὥπως ὁ ἀριθμὸς σώζεται τῶν κλήρων. L. ii. chap. 12.

ground : in others, this regulation was confined to lands within a limited distance from the capital. Some commonwealths enacted that no family should be allowed to part with its original lot of land, or ancient inheritance ; and a law of Oxylus, king of the Elians, forbade any man to mortgage above a certain proportion of his estate.*

But, in all cases, the legislator's intention was frustrated, sooner or later, by the silent operation of nature overpowering the feeble bulwarks of human regulation. Even in Crete and Sparta, where the prohibition against accumulating personal property seemed likely to perpetuate equality, and did, in fact, preserve it longest, still the course of nature at length prevailed, and to such a degree, that a strong complaint made against the Spartan government by Aristotle, is its unequal distribution of property.†

* Arist. de Rep. l. vi. s. 4.

† Lycurgus prohibited the acquisition of lands by purchase, but set no limits to their transmission and accumula-

The cause, too, by, this time, became evident from the permanent effect ; which is justly attributed, by the same philosopher, to the principle of population. Lawgivers forget, he says, that it is necessary to limit the increase of families, if they wish to limit the extent of fortunes. If children multiply beyond the means of supporting them, the intention of the law will be defeated, and families will be reduced from opulence to beggary.* It was from this conviction that both he and Plato resorted to those detestable measures for restraining the increase of children in their imaginary commonwealths, which have contributed more, perhaps, than any other instance, to furnish a practical evidence of the defec-

tion by gifts and wills. The consequence was, that, in Aristotle's time, the landed property had been engrossed by few. Hence the foundation of Montesquieu's remark : " Il faut donc que l'on règle dans cet objet, les dots des femmes, les donations, les successions, les testaments, enfin, toutes les manières de contracter." L. v. ch. 5.

* L. ii. ch. 7. Again, in the 7th book, he says, 'Αδύνατον ἐννομεῖσθαι τὴν πόλιν λίαν πολυάνθρωπον.

tive morality acquiesced in by the wisest of the ancients.

Such, then, is the fact, that, by the original constitution of human nature, inequality uniformly finds its way, in spite of every obstacle. The stream which is constantly setting against the barriers raised to oppose it, has a source so deep and permanent, that it has always, at no distant period, either found a channel, or forced one. There is no country which, in the course of a century or two, has not exhibited the same spectacle of abundance and poverty; of some who have accumulated the superfluous produce of their labours; and of others who are eager to exchange their labour for a portion of that superfluity.

In the gradual progress of time the inequality becomes more and more striking, and all the arts of civilization follow in its train. A certain portion of the society being exempted from the necessity of labour, apply to other pursuits; literature is cultivated,

genius is excited and encouraged. A chain of innumerable links is formed from the colossal fortunes of the highest rank, to the large and increasing class who are obliged to give their daily labour for their daily subsistence. It is by means of this class that all those works of utility are accomplished, which adorn the beautiful structure of a civilized country, and which, in a healthy state of things, reflect their share of advantage upon the hands that labour in their execution. And it is by a union of all the various classes that the community flourishes in strength and opulence; that the arts are every day ministering some new comfort to man's wants, or some assistance to his labours; in a word, that the gradual enlargement of the sources of knowledge and improvement of the human condition takes place, which has been shown to exalt and dignify civilized man.

It has thus appeared, from a brief statement of the laws which regulate population, that the instinctive principle which attaches

the sexes to one another, and rears a family, keeps the inhabited districts of the world so continually full, as to call into action all their resources, and oblige them to economize the means of subsistence, by making them the reward of individual exertion. I have also traced the progress by which this principle necessarily leads to an inequality of ranks and fortunes, which effect, indeed, it has constantly and universally produced in a greater or less degree, from the earliest date of history. For the primary agent is all along to be found in that original law, which multiplies the consumers of the fruits of the earth faster than the fruits themselves. The difference of men's habits and powers would signify nothing, if food were so plentiful that it could be procured without a return of labour. Were it the law of the universe, no matter how brought into execution, that every man born into the world should find himself heir to indolence and plenty, then there need be no division of property, since no one could possibly, according to

the supposition, possess what his neighbour wanted, or require what his neighbour had. Or if it had been appointed that all mankind should possess the same genius, the same powers of mind and body, and be exempt from physical evils, the division of property would not necessarily have been accompanied by inequality. But since the fact is ordained otherwise, and, for reasons already shown, wisely ordained; since men are born with various capacities of mind, and different degrees of bodily strength; since the necessaries of life can only be produced by labour; and since there are, in all countries, more claimants for the necessaries of life than can be easily or plentifully supplied with them; it must inevitably follow that possessions shall be *appropriated and unequally divided*; and that the conveniencies of life shall belong, in the greatest abundance, to the head which is most fertile in resources, or the hand which is the most industrious in exertion.

If then the wisdom is to be estimated by

the fitness of the design to its purpose, and the habitual exercise of the energies of mankind is allowed to be that purpose, enough has been said to confirm the original proposition. The Deity has provided, that by the operation of an instinctive principle in our nature, the human race should be uniformly brought into a state in which they are forced to exert and improve their powers : the lowest rank, to obtain support ; the one next in order, to escape from the difficulties immediately beneath it ; and all the classes upward, either to keep their level, while they are pressed on each side by rival industry, or to raise themselves above the standard of their birth by useful exertions of their activity, or by successful cultivation of their natural powers. If, indeed, it were possible, that the stimulus arising from this principle should be suddenly removed, it is not easy to determine what life would be except a dreary blank, or the world except an uncultivated waste. Every exertion to which civilization can be traced, proceeds directly or indirectly from its effects ; either from the actual

desire of having a family, or the pressing obligation of providing for one, or from the necessity of rivalling the efforts produced by the operation of these motives in others.

I cannot suppose it will be disputed, that the law, ordaining the multiplication, of which the effects are thus extensive, is a law of design. Among brute animals, we find the quality of fecundity subjected to intelligible regulations, and proportioned to the utility or peculiar circumstances of the species: since it is denied to strength and rapacity, and bestowed as a compensation for a short term of existence. Of the latter case, the hare and rabbit, and the insect tribes, afford familiar examples: whereas the kite lays but two eggs, the eagle but one, and the elephant produces only a single calf. In another department of nature, it is observed that a cod-fish lays many million eggs, whilst a whale brings usually one cub, and never more than two. It would have been incomprehensible if the multiplication of animals had *not* fallen under the regulation of

Providence, and been subject to assigned laws ; and these, with a thousand other instances that might be as readily adduced, manifestly prove that it *has* been directed by design. And as it would be contrary to all just analogy to believe, that brute animals received an attention denied to the human race, it is impossible to suppose that the ratio of increase among men, and its consequences, were not present to the contemplation of the Creator. In point of fact, we know that even the casualties to which one sex is more exposed than the other, are provided for by the excess of male over female births, a foresight which can only be attributed to the original mandate of Providence.*

* It is not so generally acknowledged, but appears from Humboldt's recent inquiries, that this law of nature is no less established in the different climate of America than in Europe. The proportion of male to female births in New Spain he determines to be " as 100 : 97, which indicates an excess of males nearly equal to that in France, where for 100 boys there are born 96 girls. From the whole of the data we may conclude, that in Europe, as well as in the equinoctial regions, which have enjoyed a long state of tranquillity, we

I am justified, therefore, in concluding, that the Deity has displayed the same comprehensive wisdom which is seen in the natural world, by regulating, according to a general law, the state and condition of mankind, and bringing it, without actual control or interposition, to a conformity with his plan of moral government.

should find an excess of males, if the seas, the war, and dangerous employments peculiar to our sex, did not tend incessantly to diminish their number." Pol. Ess. i. 253.

CHAPTER VI.

On the Collateral Benefits derived by the Human Race from the Principle of Population.

It will, perhaps, be objected to the preceding survey of the effects of the principle of population, that it exhibits only the bright side of the picture. Some persons may be disposed to argue, that if the rapid multiplication of the species augments the treasures of civilized society, it also entails upon civilization a certain inheritance of want, and pain, and misery ; and that the human race are little benefited by arts and improvements, which are wrung from them by the urgency of their necessities : that, however plain it may be made, that the means employed accomplish their apparent object, still it is by a mode so harsh and ungentle in its

operation, that the wisdom of the Creator is impeached, rather than displayed, when the intricate web of human society is thus unfolded, and its texture unravelled.

To these and similar objections, which have been sometimes urged against the view of human society exhibited by Mr. Malthus, some concession must be made. There is undoubtedly much want and misery, that is, much natural evil in the world. And since the law of increase is an agent of such vast importance in determining the condition of mankind, it cannot fail of producing, in the course of its operation, much of that natural evil, which is an ingredient in the cup of human nature, and inseparable from the present condition of our species. The permission of this will properly come under future consideration.

If we were peopling an Utopia, or amusing our fancy, after the manner of the ancient philosophers, with creating an imaginary republic, we should undoubtedly be inclined to banish

from it all necessity for severe labour. We should omit the curse denounced upon the first transgressors, and literally fulfilled upon their posterity, ordaining that the earth should bring forth thorns and thistles, and that man should eat bread by the sweat of his brow. But these sports of the imagination deviate from the real state of things in one most important particular. They all suppose that this world is the final object, as well as limit, of man's existence. They proceed, therefore, on premises altogether different from those I originally laid down, as derived both from reason and revelation; and which affirm, that the present state affords only a partial developement of the Creator's designs.

It is on no other premises, I repeat, that I profess to consider the appearance of the world. Those who neither allow the arguments with which reason furnishes us, strongly militating against the supposition of this being the final stage of man's existence; nor listen to the voice of Revelation which confirms these natural intimations; those, I say, who limit their views

to this contracted horizon, must take up other ground ; and must defend their ideas of the Creator's providence as they can, upon the principle of optimism. But, in a world allowed to be initiatory and preparatory, it cannot justly surprise us to find the necessity of labour admitted ; or to hear the wisdom of the Creator displayed by a view of a dispensation, which regularly brings the labours of mankind into action. Were our lot cast in a state at present perfect, we should, no doubt, see sufficient reason to adore the wisdom of the Creator. But the inhabitants of Paradise, and the inheritors of a fallen world, are not likely to meet in the same arguments, though they may agree in the same conclusion.

Under these qualifications, I shall endeavour to show, not that the human race is in the best conceivable condition, or that no evils accompany the law which regulates their increase ; but that this law makes, upon the whole, an effectual provision for their general welfare ; and that the prospective wisdom of the Cre-

ator is distinguishable in the establishment of an ordinance which is no less beneficial in its collateral effects, than it is efficacious in accomplishing the first and principal design of its enactment.

These collateral advantages are, first, the establishment of universal industry, and secondly, the quick and wide diffusion of the beneficial results of that industry. These are secured by the ordinance which regulates the increase of mankind.

I. Fecundity depends upon various causes, some of which are obvious, and others very partially understood: but by the average calculation of marriages in Europe, which is probably a fair average for the world at large, four births may be reckoned for every marriage. No doubt a fiat of the Creator might as easily have ordained that the produce should be less by one fourth, or that every marriage should bring three children. In this case, the result would still have raised the population

fully up to the means of subsistence, with the difference only of doubling the period before it reached that limit.* Therefore it would have protracted for a time, the end proposed by the physical law of increase, without preventing ultimately the difficulties inseparable from a redundant population; it would have delayed the exertion of habitual industry, and the existence of the useful arts and sciences, resulting from that industry, by all that period of years during which the population was protracted, not only in the first peopling and subsequent re-peopling of the world, but in the occupation of all new countries. Eventually the pressure of the population against the supply of food would have been no less certain and regular, unless it had also been ordained, that the supply

* Independent of the longevity attributed in Scripture to the patriarchs, the world *may have reached* the amount of its present population, supposed to be [1000 millions, in about 550 years: allowing ten persons to be alive at the end of the first twenty years, and to double their number every subsequent twenty. Several calculations of the kind occur in Wallace on the Number of Mankind.

of food should always and every where proceed in the same ratio as population.

Any complaint, therefore, must be urged, not against the particular ratio of increase from each marriage, which is, in fact, variable in different countries, and depends upon numerous circumstances with which we are little acquainted ; but against the general and incontrovertible fact, that, according to the present constitution of the human race, the increase of the species has a tendency to proceed at a quicker rate, than the increase of the supply of food.

It certainly requires no great stretch of fancy to imagine such a dispensation as might have rendered the ratios, in which population shall proceed, and the quantity of human sustenance be increased, so equal to one another, as entirely to remove all difficulty as to the support of mankind, however large their numbers might become. No restriction, no qualification was set against the original command

in Paradise, "Increase and multiply." But when Paradise was forfeited, then came the subsequent denunciation, that the replenishing of the world should entail the obligation to labour on its inhabitants.

If it was desirable that there should be any exertion among mankind, this obligation was indispensable. The nature of a being living under a dispensation of unlimited abundance, ought to be no less different than the constitution of the world he inhabited. As human nature now is, the implanted principle which leads to marriage is, mediately or immediately, the source of all effective industry. We have no reason to believe that the stream would continue to flow, if the source were cut off by which it is visibly supplied. Could a family be supported without labour, the known stimulus to exertion would be removed; energy would be exchanged for indolence, and the arrival of plenty would be followed by the stagnation of the human faculties.

We see around us a world under the powerful agency of this incentive ; and whatever may be thought of the weakness or wickedness of mankind, the fairest side of the picture they present is that which their unwearied industry and active intelligence afford. At the same time, experience does not authorize us to believe that a necessity less urgent than that now existing, would excite their dormant powers, or furnish the appearance of energy we admire. On every side, to whatever age, or rank, or condition we look, an inherent principle of indolence betrays itself, which can only be expelled by the operation of a still more powerful desire.

In savage life, indolence puts on the appearance of a positive gratification, too valuable to be bartered for any return of prospective advantage, and only relinquished on the pressure of actual uneasiness. Among the lower classes in civilized society, much of the same principle is manifest. Some prefer any chance or precarious mode of seeking subsistence to

regular industry : others are industrious till they have removed the urgency of immediate want, and, when that is satisfied, remain idle and dissolute till it returns again. The more gratifying sight of constant and contented exertion, still furnishes no countenance to the belief that it would be voluntarily undertaken, or continued without necessity. As we advance higher in the scale, we find the same necessity operating no less extensively, stimulating invention, giving stability to exertion, and, in the end, bringing all those talents to maturity by which mankind is no less benefited than adorned. Few of the most useful discoveries or acquirements, can be attained without such an unremitting attention, such a sacrifice of present enjoyment, as only a very powerful incentive can enforce : if it were otherwise, why is this field of exertion left almost exclusively to those who are not born heirs of that plenty which a different dispensation might render universal? Why are the avocations which conduce most to the welfare of the species, seldom pursued by those who

are not driven to them by the strong hand of necessity, i. e. who can by any easier means comply with the instinctive principle of nature, and support a family in the rank and sphere to which they were born?*

It is as possible to picture to the imagination a race of men, who should require no stimulus to the exercise of their minds and powers, as it is to conceive a soil that should be fertile without cultivation. But our business is with the world as it exists, and with men as we find them: and judging according to that experience, we may affirm without hesitation, that any ordinance which might establish universal plenty, would establish also universal indolence, and not only arrest civilization in its progress, but force it to retrograde, if it had once advanced. There is reason to believe that this effect has in some peculiar circumstances actually taken place; when a few tribes having left their parent and overpeopled

* See Chapter iii. p. 52, &c.

country, and found an unexpected plenty in some new abode, have lived upon that plenty till they have lost the arts of their ancestors, and left their posterity to work out anew, by the slow method of invention, the means of supplying wants or providing comfort.* How soon rude inventions are lost, when the necessity which first struck them out is removed, may be learnt from the example of the South Sea islanders, some of whom are now in greater distress from the precarious supply of iron upon which they depend, than before the visits of Europeans they had experienced from the total want of it. Be this, however, as it may, it is certain that the effect of plenty on savage nations is indolence and extravagance, till the supply that brought the evil is exhausted, and activity returns with the necessity for its exertion.

* All travellers have observed in North America proofs of evident deterioration, in the traces and remains of useful arts which have been long utterly unknown in that country. The best account of these is now to be found in Humboldt's Researches.

All mankind, as far as we know, agree in the same propensities by nature, and owe their infinite varieties only to the circumstances of society. We have no right, therefore, to assume that the consequences of plenty would be different in America and in Europe; or that, if the necessity which has produced all the multiplied inventions and ornaments of civilized life, were once removed, the faculty to suggest them would be fostered, or the industry to perfect them survive. But who would be so visionary as to affirm, that the comfort of society might be benefited by a system which excluded all the useful and ingenious arts; or the general good of mankind promoted by the extinction of all the liberal professions, the absence of all science and literature? Independence would be dearly purchased at the expense of refinement and cultivation; and universal plenty would afford a poor compensation for the gross ignorance into which mankind would be plunged.

For human labour, after all, is not sown

upon the sand ; it returns an abundant recompense even to the most wearisome and reluctant exertions. The quick multiplication of the species enables the arts to be carried on, and all the labourers in them to be supported, with a far less proportion of real evil, and a much greater share of advantage, than any hypothetical change of system could promise. That multiplication affords a numerous body of labourers, ready to exchange for support the exertion of their industry. The abundance of labourers leads to the division of labour ; which is generally known to multiply two or three hundred fold the productive powers of man. By such a division it happens that one person employed in agriculture can feed four or five others ; which enables those others to clothe, and not only to clothe, but to instruct and defend him in return, and to provide his humble cottage, and to cheer his laborious life with conveniences and comforts, which raise his situation infinitely above any benefits that could be expected to result from a different system. It is not without the assistance and

co-operation of many thousands that the very meanest person in a civilized country is provided, even according to what we falsely imagine the easy and simple manner in which he is commonly accommodated. He who first made this remark, had no hypothesis to serve or argument to support, when he added, that “the accommodation of an European prince does not always so much exceed that of an industrious and frugal peasant, as the accommodation of the latter exceeds that of an African king, the absolute master of the lives and liberties of ten thousand naked savages.”*

It appears, therefore, that the exertion of the human faculties is a result necessarily following the relative proportion which the increase of the species bears to that of food; and that, as far as we see, no other ordinance would have been effectual. The law of nature has not provided, certainly, that a gratuitous feast should be spread for every individual at his entrance into the world, at which he may partake

* Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, b. i. c. 8.

himself, and introduce whatever guests he pleases, without a return on his own part: he must pay for his own subsistence, and that of his family, by his labour, in some shape or other, according to the situation he fills. This is no *ex post facto* law; it does not take him by surprise, it is publicly engraven in the constitution of things; therefore he accommodates his mind from his youth up, to comply with the terms prescribed: the object is ever present before him, and determines all his views. Neither is the law partial; it is obligatory some way or other upon all; neither is it a law enforced by punishment alone and offering no reward: the industry of one assists others, and is assisted by them in return; and universal welfare (such welfare at least as is consistent with an imperfect state) is the consequence of universal labour.

II. The first beneficial effect of the laws of population being thus the production of industry, the second is the quick and ready communication and interchange of the acqui-

sitions of that industry among the various inhabitants of the globe.

An objector will ask, why is such interchange necessary? what advantage is gained by the provision, that one country should be peopled only by the overflowings of another? Why was not the whole intended population of the world, i. e. as many as could be easily maintained, placed at once upon its surface, with a power only of reproducing the same number? He, however, must be a bold theorist who would prefer this operation, so unlike the usual plan of the Creator's works, to the existing law, by which, according to the course of gradual multiplication, as many as can be fed, are regularly and quickly produced. The Creator might certainly have called into sudden existence, a thousand millions, the estimated number of the inhabitants of the world now,* together with the maintenance they required, with the same ease that he created a single

* Wallace on the Numbers of Mankind, p, 10.

pair: but how little would such a plan have harmonized with the wisdom discoverable in the wonderful *economy* of nature; with that *prospective contrivance* which we now admire in the organization of the universe, as far as our researches can scrutinize? Waving, however, these objections, it cannot be for a moment doubted, that the effect of any law which confined the human race to the spot in which they were born, would be a greater deterioration of mankind in point of civilization. None, it may be said, would be in want: but none would be better provided than the meanest now. Necessity, having never existed, would never have led to all those gradual improvements of which it has in every age been the parent, and by which it has raised, as was largely shown, the character and situation of man.

It is evident, that a constant communication of the inhabitants of different parts of the globe, transfers the arts and improvements which each have attained, with a degree of celerity to which their gradual discovery bears no sort of propor-

tion. 'This communication is preserved by the ordinance of multiplication ; by which the world was originally stocked with inhabitants, and by which it is kept almost uniformly full, through the continual migrations from over-peopled countries. These migrators* carry with them the language, the arts, and the improvements of their parent country. If every distinct portion of the globe had been assigned its stock of cultivators, each tribe, thus permanently settled, must have discovered by their own light their own arts, sciences, and inventions. But this perpetual obstacle to improvement is thrown down by the ordinance which has led to the frequent migrations of which history is so full ; and the bands or parties separated at various

* This has been the case in all the regular migrations, as in those from Egypt to Asia, from Asia to Greece, from Greece to the different shores of the Mediterranean, and in the later settlements from European countries in unpeopled regions. This is the regular course of things, and must not be confounded with the invasions of the Roman Empire, or the subsequent inundations of Europe from Arabia and Tartary, which were expeditions of conquest, not of colonization.

periods from countries overstocked and civilized, have carried civilization with them, disturbed, perhaps, and checked in its growth by the strong hand of necessity which tore the settlers from their native soil ; but often well adapted to a change of climate, and different mode of culture ; and striking its roots deeper, and spreading its branches more widely, than if confined to its original spot, or natural country.*

Let us consult the only guide we can trust, experience ; and look to the countries which have enjoyed least of that intercourse for which nature has established a general provision : to

* In Sicily alone, for instance, first some Iberians settled, and gave the name Trinacria ; then a band of Trojans, after the destruction of their native city : next a body of Siculi from Italy, gave the appellation which has been ever since retained. Some Phœnicians settled on the coast and in the neighbouring islands. Of the Greeks, the Chalcidians built Egesta, Naxos, Catana, and other cities ; the Megareans, Megara, and Selinus ; the Rhodians, Gela. Herod. l. 6, in init. Thuc. l. 6, s. 2, &c. Must not all these have brought a greater accession of arts, than could have been expected to be indigenous ? See also the full account of the Grecian colonies and migrations, Mitford. chap. v. s. 2.

America, for instance, at its discovery, by Columbus ; to many parts of Africa and Asia ; to China, and the islands of the Pacific. These are the countries to which we resort for examples of a savage stage, or of a retrograde, or at best a stationary condition of civilization : and these are likewise examples of people who have long remained fixed in the same spot, with little or no interchange of communication. Some of these countries, when first discovered, had no knowledge at all of any arts, except those absolutely necessary for their preservation : many were totally ignorant of the use of letters ; others had recourse to the most insufficient and cumbrous methods of supplying their place. Any cultivation of the mind, moral, religious, or literary, is here to be found in its lowest possible degree.

Still farther, it appears, that absence of intercourse is able to perpetuate barbarism in the centre of cultivation. Which of the Grecian states has left us no relic of its literature, and was confessedly most behindhand in all the arts

of civilized life? We turn at once to the community whose lawgiver prohibited the admission of strangers at home, and the intercourse of his own citizens abroad.* The natives of Sparta never attained any degree of mental improvement, till they left the artificial constitution under which they were born, and were brought into the natural situation of the rest of mankind by colonization.

If we prefer the positive to the negative argument, we may look on the other side for those countries which have advanced quickest and farthest in the road of mental and civil improvement. Opportunity of communication in all ages has facilitated this progress to such a degree, that a gradual scale of civilization would pretty exactly serve to indicate the measure of foreign intercourse.

He is no consistent philosopher, who would take away the pillars by which civilization is

* Plutarch, Vit. Lyc. p. 121.

visibly supported, and argue, that civilization would stand as securely without them. Nor is it necessary to prove again that the existing law of population is the principal of these pillars : or that the necessity it occasions is at the bottom of all intercourse, whether for the purposes of colonization or commerce. Without that necessity men would not be very likely to cross seas or traverse deserts, however easily reconciled to it, when placed under its influence.

In truth, those who would prefer an ordinance of mere *reproduction*, must create the world itself anew, as well as its inhabitants. Every district must realize the dreams of the golden age, and produce in itself all things requisite to the prosperity of mankind. Cinchona, the sugar-cane, and the potatoe, must be indigenous in Europe ; the useful metals must abound in America and Africa. This argument is not confined to the great divisions of the globe, but is equally applicable to every separate district : all of which must possess

within themselves the materials necessary for every useful art, and bring their own inhabitants to equal perfection in the practice of it, or they would gain little on the whole by an ordinance which prevented communication. According to the existing dispensation, there is a division of labour among the inhabitants of the globe as well as among the inhabitants of a city or kingdom, which is equally beneficial on the larger and on the smaller scale.

The fact is, that, when we form the first idea of a scheme from which the stimulus of necessity should be removed, we are apt to paint to our imagination a society restricted from farther increase, protected from more numerous tribes, yet placed in the midst of surrounding civilization; like the republic of Marino as described by Addison, in the neighbourhood of the populous Italian states, receiving the works of art and of manufacturing industry they might require, in return for the redundant produce of the flocks and herds which it was their simple and innocent concern to tend: enjoying, in

short, at once, the advantages of a golden and an iron age. But in forming a consistent hypothesis we must of course suppose the whole world peopled, as far as it was peopled at all, in the same manner, and advancing in the same way to the rudiments of art and science, without the collision of foreign intercourse or the assistance of foreign wealth. And if such an hypothesis were applied to practice, and followed to its consequences in particular detail, the plain statement would contain the proof of the wisdom of a provision which is calculated to unite mankind into one great family, so as to render partial improvement universally beneficial, and to make individual genius the common property of the whole race.

We shall appreciate more justly the benefits continually diffusing by these means, if we contemplate the state of the world at the present point of time ; and consider how, in every part of it, the quick progress of population is spreading civilization. We may look first to northern Asia : where Russia has been for

many years extending her supernumerary subjects over the rude and pastoral nations which belong to that immense empire. These comparatively civilized people, together with the settlers which have been transported from the over-peopled districts of Germany, are introducing habits of industry, and communicating the advantage of their experience in the arts. From the moment when an industrious race has established itself in the neighbourhood of a rude and indolent people, the improvement of their condition is inevitable. They have no other chance of competition. For, the addition of people, and their superior views of comfort increasing the demand for the necessaries of life enhance also their marketable value to a price which only industry can pay. The natives, therefore, either unite with the foreign race by intermarriage and assimilation, becoming an useful and industrious people; or they retire from habits with which they can neither cope nor imitate, and, through the increasing difficulty of rearing a family, gradually disappear. The barbarism of Asiatic Russia has felt

this influence ; and civilized habits have, during the last fifty years, been spreading with rapid strides. Siberia, which was formerly a wilderness utterly unknown, and in population far behind even the almost desert tracts of North America, is now a flourishing colony, its imported inhabitants greatly exceeding the natives in number. And the case is generally the same throughout the settlements, where that degree of civilization is already attained, which the rigour of the climate, the difficulty of transporting produce, and the little opportunity of commercial intercourse allow.

The immense and populous kingdoms of southern Asia do not appear to require the assistance of foreign supernumeraries. Being subject to regular governments and division of ranks ; supported by agriculture, and advanced in the arts ; they should be enumerated amongst those who have long possessed the improvements which a full population introduces. But there are various degrees of civilization : and the influence and prejudices of Paganism have

sunk Asia far below the level to which her luxuriant soil and climate might enable her to rise. The commercial industry of the crowded European kingdoms has penetrated hither also ; and has transferred a part of their population, small indeed in comparative number, but of inestimable value in respect of their attainments. The light thus introduced has already benefited some portion of these vast empires ; which, by their ignorance of the principles of law and freedom, afford a striking example of the slow progress improvement makes in any region which has little collision with others.

Africa, from the nature of its soil and its want of internal communication, though it may have its turn in the gradual diffusion of knowledge, must always remain the least populous, and consequently the least improved, of the great divisions of the globe. But Africa, too, is profiting from the fulness of other countries, and from the spirit of enterprise which is the effect of increasing population. Even there settlements are forming for the express purpose

of meliorating the habits of the people, and communicating to them a share of the advantages which other nations have already attained.

The destiny of America is more fortunate, and the prospect it presents is a valuable illustration of the uses of that active principle which conveys civilization universally. This vast continent, which on its first discovery was, for the most part, wandered over by thin and scattered tribes, is now inhabited by a cultivated and increasing people; and has received by inheritance those treasures of improvement which the nations of Europe have been through many centuries painfully acquiring. The case was similar with the colonists from ancient Greece, many of whose settlements, within a period comparatively trifling, rivalled the mother country, not only in extent of territory, but in arts and opulence. But the recent and living example of America is peculiarly calculated to place before us the reality of the ad-

vantages effected by colonization.* The necessity of legal restraints in countries that emerge by their own efforts from barbarism, is learnt by experience of mischief; by colonists it is already known: and the forms of law most compatible with the essentials of liberty, have been discovered. The principles of government are understood, and the benefits of subordination acknowledged. Literature is not obliged to force its way from its first elements, but has an advanced point to set out from.

The subject requires no more than to glance, in passing, at these beneficial effects of the overflow of Europe; for it will not surely be denied, that such an increase in the number of the civilized inhabitants of the globe is justly termed a beneficial consequence resulting from a full population. And it must not be forgotten,

* “The colony of a civilized nation which takes possession either of a waste country, or of one so thinly inhabited that the natives easily give place to the new settlers, advances more rapidly to wealth and greatness than any other human society.” *Wealth of Nations*, b. iv. ch. vii.

that not only the moral acquirements, but the natural productions in which one country has the advantage over another, are spread throughout the world by this interchange of its great families.* “The inhabitants of western Europe have deposited in America whatever vegetable treasures they have been receiving for two thousand years by their communications with the Greeks and Romans; by the irruption of the hordes of central Asia, by the conquest of the Arabs, by the Crusades, and the navigation of the Portuguese. All these productions, augmented by those of America, pass farther still to the islands of the South Sea and New Holland. A colony collects in a small spot every thing most valuable, which wandering man has discovered over the whole system of the globe.”†

* “The potatoe, indigenous in South America, has become common in New Zealand, in Japan, in Java, in Boutan, and Bengal, where potatoes are considered more useful than the bread-fruit tree introduced at Madras. Their cultivation extends from the extremity of Africa to Labrador, Iceland, and Lapland.” Humboldt.

† Humboldt, vol. ii. p. 500.

Lastly, it remains to be observed, that the important purpose effected by this provision in disseminating the blessings of Revelation, must have been prominent in the view of the Creator. Were there no stimulus to intercourse between different countries, any revelation must either have been as partial as that made to the Jews, or it must have been displayed separately to every district of the globe. But, through the influence of the principle we are considering, civilization becomes the instrument of diffusing Christianity: how active and how powerful an instrument, is abundantly testified by the unexampled exertions which are employed, at the present moment, to translate the Scriptures into every known language, and to distribute them in the remotest quarters of the world. Whoever contemplates this fact, must either be blind to the advantages of such distribution, or must acknowledge the wisdom of a dispensation, by means of which a Revelation made in one age and country, is, in effect, made to all ages and all nations. For, if we analyze those means, we find that it

is the activity of full population in England which has carried the arts that minister to human comfort to unrivalled perfection ; that the industry of the same population employed in the transmission of those arts has found access to the rudest and most distant countries ; and that the fulness of every avenue to wealth at home is the foundation of that readiness to emigrate and colonize, which leads to the establishment of Christianity together with civilization.

This transference of arts and population leads me to remark, as one of the most admirable beauties of the system, its easy adaptation to the various circumstances in which mankind may be placed by the fortune of their birth. What is the fact? Population, which, in the American states doubles itself within twenty-five years, in the old countries of Europe is not supposed to double in less than five hundred years.* Here is a difference so enor-

* This calculation of Smith's does not agree with the quick progress of population in these kingdoms during the last cen-

mous, that we might believe at first sight that it could only be effected by the interposition of rude and violent checks to the increase, in the shape of famine or epidemic disease. The plan, however, of a wise Creator is of gentler operation. It does not require that the population should be reduced by depriving of existence those who have been once brought into the world; but it provides by a natural check, that the existing number shall never far exceed the actual demand of the country itself for labourers.† Redundance is prevented, not re-

tury. But it may be a just average for Europe taken together; and it does not really affect the argument, whether the difference is ten or twenty-fold. The fact mentioned by Mr. Malthus is more than sufficient for the purpose: "In New Jersey the proportion of births to deaths, on an average of seven years, ending 1743, was 300 to 100. In France and England the highest average proportion cannot be reckoned at more than 120 to 100." Vol. ii. p. 67.

† A perversion of the real state of the fact as to this point is too common. The French pamphlet I before alluded to is mainly directed against an imaginary position which the author attributes to Mr. Malthus, viz. *the necessity of misery* to correct the evils of the principle of population. However we may pity the faculties which could fall into such an error, it certainly shows a just view of Divine Providence to be in-

medied ; and prevented by the simple effect of that division of property, which obliges every man, before he brings a family into the world, to see the means of providing for it within his reach ; and thus gradually, as the inhabitants of a country advance nearer and nearer to the limits of their attainable support, protracts the average period of marriage much beyond the

dignant at this supposed injury to his attributes. It appears undeniably from the calculation in the preceding chapter, that if the population of any country were to proceed *unchecked*, even for a short period, it would so far surpass the power of the land to produce subsistence, that nothing but the death of a part could allow any to survive. But it does not proceed, and is not intended to proceed, in this manner, except where the productive country is as unlimited as the power to increase the number of consumers. If prudential restraint, i. e. the *preventive check*, is disregarded, who can doubt that famine, war, or epidemics will arise? just as bankruptcy will come upon a man who takes no care of his fortune ; or disease will follow the neglect of prudential rules for the management of the constitution. But it is *not necessary* that the prudential check should be violated ; neither, therefore, is it *necessary* that famine and pestilence should carry off a redundant population.

Mr. Malthus, with great candour, has omitted some paragraphs in his late edition, which had before created a wrong impression in the minds of many readers.

time which unchecked nature would dictate. It is true, that if the inclinations were indulged with as little restraint and consideration in old countries, as in the empty wastes of America, some melancholy corrective, as famine, pestilence, or the sword, must soon ensue, and bring things to a level. But man, being moderated by reason, as well as impelled by passion, has the means within his power of keeping clear of any such desperate condition. Where a space appears, in which the principle of population may act unlimitedly, the natural desire is also the law of reason. But under the different appearance which most European countries present, rational prudence interferes as a check to the natural desire, and, by setting before every individual his own best interests, actually, though perhaps unconsciously, determines the rate in which population shall proceed.

In all this there is no violence, no cruelty, nothing contrary to the nature of man, as a reasonable and accountable being. If his lot is

cast in a country where no opening appears, by filling which he may gratify the natural wish of planting a family around him; this wish, however natural, yields at once, and almost without a struggle, to the circumstances which impede its gratification. The mind, diverted from one object, turns, without pain or convulsion, to another: it seeks for amusement in the endless varieties of pursuit which civilized life affords, and devotes the attention which, in another case, would have been paid to a family, to the interests of dignified ambition or literature. In those ages of refinement which oppose obstacles in the way of marriage, many, like Epaminondas, have left a posterity behind them in the victories they have achieved, not indeed over their fellow men, but over the difficulties of natural and moral science; victories which might never have been gained, but for the circumstances which diverted their attention from the common concerns of ordinary life. This applies to educated minds. In the inferior ranks, a man sees his prospect fairly placed before him. If he chooses, as it is

usually better he should, in preference to ease and freedom from care, the comforts of domestic enjoyment and affectionate intercourse, he knows that he must pay for those comforts in his labour.* And thus his labour has a perpetual stimulus, and a daily reward. Without labour nature gives nothing any where. A man born into a country already fully occupied is possessed of many advantages; but those advantages certainly demand from him in return, severe and constant exertion, if he claims to himself the peculiar privilege of a young society—that of having a family in early life, together with the comforts attending a state of advanced civilization.

* Among the other uncandid remarks of which Mr. Malthus has been the object, he has been accused as the enemy of marriage. But what rule will the objector venture to substitute for that which he has laid down? “The only plain and intelligible measure with regard to marriage is the having a fair prospect of being able to maintain a family.” Or again, “The lowest prospect with which a man can be justified in marrying seems to be the power, when in health, of earning such wages, as, at the average price of corn, will maintain the average number of living children to a marriage.” Appendix, l. ii. p. 537.

But on the other hand, is a country unexpectedly discovered in which there is abundance of unappropriated land, affording a fair prospect of support and improvement of their condition to new adventurers? There are many prepared to embrace the prospect, and dissatisfied with the reward their labour can attain at home, to transfer their exertions and affections to an adopted land. And there is already, in human nature, an inherent principle, which, now freed from prudential restraints, in a short period will people the vacant space with intelligent existence, with millions of beings possessed of all the improvable faculties which distinguish mankind, and heirs to all the hopes which religion opens to our view.

Thus, when population has answered its purpose, and it becomes expedient that it should be checked for a while, the foreseen difficulty of procuring support retards it, silently, but effectually. And if the expedience lies the other way, there is a natural power at

hand by which the advantage attained by civilization in one country is quickly communicated to another.

It appears, then, that the principle of population, prescribed by the Deity as an instrument for peopling the world with a successive stock of intelligent inhabitants, and keeping it in that state which was most agreeable to his plan in its formation, not only fills but civilizes the globe, and contains in itself a provision for diffusing the beneficial effects which it originally generates. To trace the power of such a principle, and to discover, on inquiry, that an object so extensive as the replenishment and civilization of the globe is accomplished by the silent operation of a single natural law, empowers us to pronounce that the designs of the Creator are carried into execution with infinite wisdom. Neither should it be forgotten, that the law itself, by which these ends are attained, is neither harsh nor coercive, but forms an important part of our earthly happiness : it is not written in characters of severity,

but promulgated by the gentle voice of persuasion. The first fruit of that instinctive principle which terminates in the results we have deduced and contemplated, is the passion of love; which, among the most rational and improved part of mankind, refines, chastens, and animates the soul; encourages the noblest exertions, and inspires the sublimest sentiments. Even in lower stages of civilization, love has been found to cherish feelings elevated far above the general standard, to soften the severity of pastoral habits, and disarm the ferocity of the conqueror. Among the rude and uneducated classes, the principle of which I have traced the effects, is both the source and the pledge of domestic union: and by the “charities of father, son, and brother,” which it introduces, affords a voluntary support to the imbecility of the weaker sex, and to the helpless condition of infancy and childhood. To enlarge, however, upon this head, would be to encroach on a subject more properly belonging to that part of this work which treats of the goodness of the Cre-

ator. I shall accordingly conclude the present chapter, by a concise recapitulation of the general argument.

It appeared then, first, to be the design of the Creator to people the world with rational and improvable beings, placed there, it should seem, in a state preparatory to some higher sphere of existence, into which they might hereafter be removed. With this view, he implanted in the first progenitors of the species a passion transmitted by them to their descendants; which in the outset prompts the finest feelings of the mind, and leads to that close union of interests and pursuits, by which the domestic comfort and harmony of the human race is most effectually promoted. The operation of this principle, filling the world with competitors for support, enforces labour and encourages industry, by the advantages it gives to the industrious and laborious at the expense of the indolent and extravagant. The ultimate effect of it is, to foster those arts and improvements which most dignify the character and

refine the mind of man ; and lastly, to place mankind in that situation which best enables them to improve their natural faculties, and at the same time best exercises, and most clearly displays, their virtues.

The collateral benefits derived from the same principles were shown to be the promotion of universal comfort, by ensuring the most effective disposition of labour and skill : and the diffusion of the civilization thus attained, by a gradual and steady progress, throughout the various regions of the habitable globe.

Such is the view of the omniscience and comprehensive wisdom of the Creator, deducible from the facts respecting population, and its tendency to a quicker increase than the supply of food can keep pace with, which have been first explained to the present generation, and added to the stock of physical truths unfolded by modern inquiry.* The particular effects

* The final cause of such an universal law, viz. to stimulate energy and industry, has been succinctly hinted by the

of the multiplication of the species, which the object Mr. Malthus had in view obliged him to illustrate and enlarge upon, are so unprepossessing, that many persons have forcibly shut their eyes against the completeness of the induction, and the extent of the evidence by which the force of the principle is indisputably proved. Others, unable to withstand conviction, have been inclined to class this among the "boisterous doubts and sturdy objections, wherewith, in philosophy, as well as in divinity, the unhappiness of our knowledge too nearly acquaints us."† They have considered it as an anomaly in the system of divine administration; a provision for entailing upon mankind much laborious poverty,

expositor of the principle, in his excellent chapter upon moral restraint. Had it made part of his subject to trace its moral as far as its physical effects, I imagine there would have been as little room left for subsequent observations in one branch of the argument as the other.

† Sir Thomas Brown, *Religio Medici*. "More of these," continues the excellent author, "no man has known than myself; which I confess I conquered, not in a martial posture, but on my knees.

and some painful indigence. The antidote, however, is commonly found to grow within reach of the poison. The instinctive principle by which every country in the world is replenished with inhabitants as fast as its fertility allows, when more generally understood, and more fully reflected upon, will be appealed to as a proof, that as our knowledge and researches extend, they discover to us, in the moral as well as in the natural world, new proofs of most comprehensive wisdom in the Creator. It is, in fact, the mighty engine, which, operating constantly and uniformly, keeps our world in that state which is most agreeable to the design of the creation, and renders mankind the spontaneous instrument of their Maker, in filling and civilizing the habitable globe. We may not, perhaps, be able to discover all the bearings, or follow all the consequences of a principle which is undoubtedly the primary, though secret agent, in producing all the boundless varieties of the human condition. It ought, however, to satisfy us, if, as our inquiries penetrate farther into the general laws

of the animate and inanimate creation, we clearly discover a wonderful subserviency of appointed means to the accomplishment of some uniform design : affording, even where the design is but partially understood, such testimony of wisdom in the means, as obliges us to rely in humble acquiescence upon the Supreme Disposer of both.

PART III.

ON THE GOODNESS OF THE CREATOR.



PART III.

ON THE GOODNESS OF THE CREATOR.

CHAPTER I.

*Proofs of a benevolent Design in the Creator,
from the Constitution of Mankind.*

IT is sublimely declared in the Christian Scriptures, that “God is Love.” In truth, to figure to ourselves under any other character a Being of infinite wisdom to conceive, and power to execute his designs, would appal the imagination of his dependent creatures. Neither can we find, in reasoning à priori, and from the nature of things, any foundation for believing that the misery rather than the happiness of those dependent creatures can be desired or devised by a Being who cannot possibly be actuated by any of the motives from which we know that injustice proceeds, as ignorance, selfishness, or partiality; and who can have

entertained, so far as we are able to discover, no other object in creating man, except the intention of finally communicating a larger proportion of happiness than misery. These are the principles from which is deduced the necessity of justice and benevolence in the Creator.

Arguments of this nature will have more or less effect, according to the constitution of the mind to which they are presented. At the same time it must be conceded, that the works of God generally considered, form the best criterion of his intentions ; and that, however indisputable the eternal truths may be which render goodness inseparable from power and wisdom, there will still remain a reasonable inquiry, how far the actual appearance of the world justifies this conclusion. And, in point of fact, many, as was before observed, have denied the moral attributes of God, who have deduced his physical attributes from the works of the creation. It is sufficient to instance Lord Bolingbroke, who has declared, that a self-existent Being, the first cause of all things, infinitely powerful and infinitely wise, is

the God of natural theology ; but he sees no ground for the assertion, that God is just, and good, and righteous, and holy, as well as powerful and wise : an assertion which he evidently thinks inconsistent with the admission of evil.* He will not allow, with some of the ancient theists, that love was the first principle of things, and that it determined God to bring his creatures into existence. He argues, that it cannot be said of the moral attributes which we ascribe to the Supreme Being, that they appear, like his wisdom, in his works ; nay, he says, “ it cannot be disputed, and all sides agree, that many of the phænomena are repugnant to our ideas of justice and goodness.” I have selected the terms of the more modern sceptic : but his is, in fact, the same objection

* Phil. Works, v. 315, &c. See also Leland, vol. i. 387, &c. Gibbon transfers the remark even to the Hebrew Scriptures : “ The moral attributes of Jehovah may not easily be reconciled to the standard of *human* virtue ; his metaphysical qualities are darkly expressed ; but each page of the Pentateuch and of the Prophets is an evidence of his power.” History, ch. 50.

which has been urged ever since the days of Epicurus, who alleged that the existence of evil, whether natural or moral, must either disprove the omnipotence, or prove the malevolence, of the Deity.*

Lord Bolingbroke does not fail in severity against those divines who have ventured to assert that God made man only to be happy. Such an assertion, indeed, it is sufficiently evident, cannot be maintained. But it has been made with more attention to the rules of induction than the contrary conclusion of Lord Bolingbroke. It is at least founded on a comprehensive view of the general laws observed

* “Deus aut vult tollere mala, et non potest ; aut potest et non vult : aut neque vult neque potest ; aut et vult et potest. Si vult et non potest, imbecillis est, quod in Deum non redit : si potest et non vult, invidus, quod æque alienum a Deo. Si neque vult neque potest, et invidus et imbecillis est, idoque neque Deus. Si vult et potest, quod solum Deo convenit ; unde ergo sunt mala ?” Lactant. de Ira Dei, cap. 13. Lactantius's answer is on the principle of King, in his Origin of Evil, that God could have removed the evil, but, in so doing, would have removed more good than evil.

in the constitution of the world, though with too much neglect of the exceptions : whereas Lord Bolingbroke requires us to deduce our conclusion respecting the character of the Deity, in defiance of all just argument, not from those general laws, but from the exceptions themselves.

It will be necessary, first, to touch very briefly upon the arguments by which it has been shown, beyond the possibility of contradiction, that the general laws of our system evince that regard for the happiness of mankind which we call goodness in the Deity : and I shall then inquire, at more length, how far the exceptions to which objectors refer, may be accounted for without militating against this conclusion.

Government, whether divine or human, proposes to itself some special object ; keeps some plan in view, in conformity to which those subject to its influence must move ; points out some actions to be done, and others to be shunned. Now, human governments employ the agency of terror, and enforce obedience by

punishment alone. They order, they forbid, they deter, they chastise. Rewards, for reasons which have been often assigned, they neither propose nor confer ; and the only return which can be expected from the most studious observance of their laws, is immunity from their penal sanctions. Had the Ruler of the world prescribed to himself the same course, human life would have proved a very unenviable possession. That he might have done so, that he would have done so, if he had not willed by preference, and, to a certain degree, the earthly happiness of mankind, is no less evident, than that he has really contrived the system on which the world is governed with benevolence in view.

I. Mankind are endowed, as their business on earth requires, with two sets of faculties, corporeal and intellectual : and it has been already shown to be a reasonable assumption, that their right exertion, of these faculties was the object proposed in their creation. With this constitution, it obviously appears that two modes of government might be applicable to

man ; and that, to perform the part assigned him, he might either have been stimulated by unmixed and unrecompensed pain, or induced and rewarded by gratification. It were possible, doubtless, that the satisfaction of hunger and the other appetites, should, at best, only have proved the alleviation of suffering ; that mental exertion and social intercourse should be accompanied by no delight ; that reciprocal affection and the domestic charities should be prescribed to us as barren duties, but rewarded by no return of pleasure. It were possible that uneasiness should not only be the spring of all our actions, as has been asserted with too little limitation, but that no enjoyment should be consequent upon the exertions to which we were so prompted.

This, I say, *might have been* the law of nature. But, on the contrary, even in those cases where a desire to escape from present pain, that is, where uneasiness, positively felt, determines our will in regard to our actions ; it is ordained by the general constitution of

the world that the means by which we attain our object, are accompanied with gratification. Human life is itself supported, from the cradle to the grave, through the medium of gratification. The species is continued by the influence of a passion which enlivens existence and sweetens exertion. We are not goaded by pain to labour, without a recompense of pleasure; we are not tormented into a course of action conformable to the divine plan of government, but allured to obey it, by the prospect of some attainable satisfaction. The desire of distinction, the hope of bettering our condition, the love of ease, are the universal motives to exertion, because it is understood that pleasure accompanies the attainment of ease and distinction. Uneasy sensations, indeed, properly so called, although they are the appointed admonitions against danger, are very seldom the immediate stimulants of action: but whether employed as stimulants or admonitions, it is uniformly provided that some reward should attend the energies exerted in obedience to them. And that these rewards

are the gratuitous gift of benevolence on the part of the Supreme Contriver, must remain an incontrovertible proposition, till it be shown on the other side that the government of the world could not be carried on without them: or that all mankind might not have been forced into habitual action by the sting of positive pain, as well as a West Indian slave, if they had been subject to the control of a ruler equally indifferent towards their happiness.

II. That the happiness of man was consulted by his Creator, appears no less evidently from the constitution of our intellectual faculties, than from our bodily sensations. The nature of those faculties, and the improvement which they are capable of receiving from exercise, show that it was the intention of the Creator to bring the powers of the mind into action by which the advantage of mankind collectively is no less promoted, than the rank of individuals is exalted in the scale of beings. It is contrived accordingly that the situation allotted to mankind renders the exertion of their mental powers

necessary ; and the chain of circumstances, as has been seen already, is so linked together, as to produce that exertion, invariably and universally, to a greater or less degree, in all states of civilization. It commonly happens, however, that this exertion is not made for the sake of any pleasure *immediately* resulting from it ; the intellectual faculties are not improved, nor the imagination cultivated, for the purpose of obtaining the gratification which a well-cultivated imagination and a vigorous mind confer : but any such pleasure is rather the *result* than the *object* of mental exertion ; which is originally undergone with the intent of supporting or bettering our condition in society, or from the necessity of keeping up to that standard which a state of general cultivation has raised. The pleasures, therefore, which reward a mind whose powers are cultivated, and energies habitually employed, may be as properly styled gratuitous as those which we receive through the medium of the external senses. They are the incidental consequence of a labour undertaken for other purposes than those of obtaining a return

of pleasure ; and which would be undertaken equally, the circumstances of the world remaining the same, even if no such return attended it.

That the pleasures, however, thus gratuitously bestowed, are not inconsiderable, will be universally acknowledged. Though they are moderate in degree, they are frequent in occurrence : and alike exempt from all the evil of excess, and clear from any deduction of pain. They impart a charm to the common concerns and business of life, which, without them would be necessary, but tedious and dull. For, it is not only true, that, as the moderate exercise of the body is agreeable to a person in health, so to a mind habitually active, its own exertions are pleasurable ; but it is also a result of the pleasure annexed by our constitution to the exercise of the imagination, that there is scarcely an object in art or nature, which may not, either in itself, or through representation and description, excite a pleasing idea to a well-cultivated mind.

If the origin of these gratifications is considered, it becomes evident that they are not fortuitous, but interwoven with our constitution, by the primary design of Providence. The fact, with respect to the pleasures here alluded to, viz. those dependent upon literature and the improvement of taste, stands confessedly thus: that to a mind invigorated by exercise, and refined by cultivation, a new class of pleasures is introduced, and an avenue is opened to intellectual gratification, of which there is no limit except the boundaries of nature herself, in all her infinite varieties. Then, farther, if we inquire into the mode through which these pleasures are received, it will appear that the images which are delightful to a person of improved taste, afford that delight from some pleasing emotion which they are calculated to raise; either by an agreeable interest, suggested by the object itself, or by renewing, through the medium of the imagination, some former interest or satisfaction, which it is now agreeable to recal. It is not, therefore, the object itself, whether seen in nature or represented by those

who describe or copy nature ; but the ideas which that object is able to excite, which gratify the mind ; and which are raised in us by a regular and secret association, discernible in its effect, but often escaping our notice in its mode of operation.

But although the association, as it thus appears, is the immediate, it cannot be the ultimate cause of the pleasure. The association pleases by exciting emotion ; but in the emotion itself the pleasure originally resides. “ The ideas suggested by the scenery of spring, are ideas productive of emotions of cheerfulness, of gladness, and of tenderness. The images suggested by the prospect of ruins, are images belonging to pity, to melancholy, and to admiration. The ideas, in the same manner awakened by the view of the sea in a storm, are ideas of power, of majesty, and of terror.”* We must, however, go one step farther, in order to inquire why these emotions are pleasing. And this can only be referred to the original constitution of our

* Alison on Taste, i. p. 75, oct. ed.

nature, which is so framed as to be gratified by the trains of feeling thus awakened, and thus constantly arising in every intelligent mind.

It is necessary to insist upon this, because, since it has been received, apparently with much justice, that the pleasures of taste are derived from our own associations, it might perhaps be forgotten, that the pleasures are not altogether of our own formation. The power of being so pleased is, in fact, as much the Creator's gift, as the gratification arising from a sweet flavour, a beautiful colour, or an harmonious sound. The sweetness of sugar would be wasted, if the palate were not naturally gratified by that taste ; and harmony is lost upon a diseased or imperfect ear. So would the pleasures of association, or in other words, the pleasures belonging to an improved understanding, cease altogether, if the mind were not naturally susceptible of pleasure arising from its own emotions. That it is thus susceptible, affords a strong additional proof of the benevolence of the Creator ; who in the same manner that he

has rendered the means of our preservation agreeable, has also bestowed a reward upon those exertions of the mind which were rendered necessary by a separate branch of the dispensation relating to mankind.

This rapid outline of the plan upon which our bodily and mental faculties are constituted, is sufficient to show that the design of God, in creating man, is carried into execution generally by the medium of pleasure instead of the operation of pain ; and that he has superadded gratifications to the exertion of all our faculties, without which his counsels might be fulfilled as completely, but less happily for mankind. I deem it superfluous to enlarge upon a subject which so many excellent writers have occupied, and upon which so much has been already shown, that it is evidently the concern of the opponents of divine goodness to argue by opposite proofs, that the happiness of man was *not* the object of the Creator. It is as unnecessary in moral as in philosophical inquiries to labour farther in proving points which have

been proved already. More truth would be elicited, and much pains spared, if each reasoner set out where his predecessor in the same subject had concluded ; or only thought himself obliged to demonstrate anew points that had been hitherto imperfectly explained.

The example, however, of Bolingbroke, which I before adduced, affords an instance, amongst others, of arguments raised against the general conclusion, from the numerous exceptions which confessedly militate against it ; and which, in the opinion of some, prove the object of the Creator not to have been benevolent, or according to others, frustrate his benevolent contrivance. Let it be allowed, they say, that there is a visible provision for the happiness of man ; that sources of gratification are opened, such as cannot be resolved into mere utility, and evidencing a desire upon the part of the Creator corresponding to what might have been antecedently expected, that man should be happy. But in a Being of infinite power, why is this provision frustrated ? Why do we actually find so great a

proportion of natural evil, in the shape of pain and privation ; and of moral confusion, from the existence of vice, the consequences of which are destructive to happiness, and entail misery on the good as well as on the wicked ? “ If we behold any thing irregular in the works of man, if any machine answer not the purpose it was made for—if we find something in it repugnant to itself or others, we attribute that to the impotence, ignorance, or malice of the workman, but since these qualities have no place in God, how come they to have place in his works ?”*

This objection embraces an inquiry which has been often pursued : neither indeed can it be expected, from the limited nature of our faculties and our want of a comprehensive knowledge of the divine counsels, that it ever should receive so complete an answer as to set at rest the curiosity of man upon a subject at once so perplexed and so interesting. But as the difficulty it involves is both more important and more obvious than any other within the range of theology ; and

* King's *Origin of Evil*, p. 72.

as there are various courses of argument by which it may be met; additional inquirers may be still usefully employed, in considering the disorders of the natural and moral world, the degree in which they exist, and the probable design of the Creator in permitting their existence.

CHAPTER II.

*The present Existence of Mankind considered
as a State of moral Trial.*

ON our entrance upon this subject, it is necessary to premise what has sometimes been kept out of sight by the visible and prominent disorders of man's moral state, namely, that there are still proofs of *an evident determination in favour of virtue* in the world. This determination is shown by the tendency of virtue to promote happiness, to gain superiority, to acquire the love and approbation of mankind; while vice, on the other hand, is not only punished as detrimental to society, but excites general abhorrence, as it were from some innate principle, however in many instances perverted. The fact, at all events, whether ascribed to innate

sentiment, or to the spontaneous influence of reason, or to the universal effects of virtue upon society, is undeniable, that, in spite of the extent and prevalence of evil, it is the uniform tendency of mankind to favour, love, and admire virtue; and that this being part of the constitution of things, or necessarily arising out of it, amounts to a declaration from “Him who is supreme in nature, which side he is of, and which part he takes; a declaration clearly in favour of virtue and against vice.”*

But supposing it allowed, that mankind, by the exertion of some of their inherent faculties, usually discern, and even choose by preference, where their passions do not interfere, a course of conduct conformable to the general rules of moral virtue; a fact which, in this low view of it, will hardly be denied; the question, it is

* Butler, *Analogy*, chap. iii. to which I refer, as having indisputably established the fact alluded to. See also some remarks to the same purpose in *Search's Light of Nature*, vol. v. p. 307.

still said, does not so much concern the *degree* as the *existence*, of moral evil—an evil which has hitherto kept the world in a state of perpetual disturbance, which deforms universally, though unequally, the human mind and character in every individual, and overwhelms a large proportion in unrepented sin; which exposes them to present misery and detestation, and, as we are expressly told by Revelation, to the severest punishment in a life to come.* This question is not completely answered by alleging that free will is man's most valuable quality; that his abuse of this power has introduced the disorders of the moral world; and that man, therefore, himself the delinquent, cannot reasonably arraign the divine goodness for his

* The Scripture history of the fall of our first parents, and its consequences, however satisfactorily it accounts to Christians for the present state of man, cannot be expected to silence sceptics; because the argument of the objector goes farther back, and inquires why they were permitted, or created liable to fall. This is the objection of Bolingbroke, when he complains of the severity with which God punished our first parents for a fault which he foreknew they would commit, when he abandoned their free-will to the temptation of committing it.

own bad use of his distinguishing property.* Surely when we reflect upon the past history of the world, when we contemplate its present appearance, and when at the same time we turn our thoughts to that future state of existence which forms the best hope and consolation of the good; our reason must forcibly suggest to us, that, as far as our views can embrace the question, it would appear infinitely better for mankind if they had possessed no opportunity of making a bad election, or had been determined invincibly in favour of a good one, than that they should be exposed to the hazards of a contest where all are endangered, and so many are sure to fall irrecoverably.†

* This is the scope of King's argument in his famous *Origin of Evil*. "If we can show that more evils necessarily arise from withdrawing or restraining the use of free-will, than from permitting the abuse of it, it must be evident that God is obliged to suffer either these or greater evils. And since the least of these necessary evils is chosen, even infinite goodness could not possibly do better." Sect. v. subs. l.

† It is a principal inquiry of Bayle, in his well-known discussion of this subject, why God, foreseeing that a creature would sin, if left to its own free conduct, did not determine it to that which was good, as he does continually

Whoever endeavours to prove that mankind, in being left liable to error, are placed in the most desirable state, lies under the disadvantage of arguing against the general apprehension and conviction which must result from a survey of the world. That general conviction asserts, that the being free and liable, and consequently likely, without constant diligence and painful struggles, to choose evil, is not only the greatest drawback on individual, but on universal happiness; that it leads to the heaviest misfortunes and the most poignant anguish to which life is exposed: of which the chief alleviation is the hope of becoming at length victorious in such a difficult trial, of being relieved from intercourse with guilty free agents, and of enjoying the delightful tranquillity of a repose from the disturbing power of passion.*

determine the souls of the blest in paradise. The best answer, probably, which that objection can meet with is given by Law in his notes on King, vol. iv. p. 112, chap. v. sect 5, subs. 2. But it is more calculated to silence, than to satisfy objections.

* The passage in Cicero to this purpose is very striking:
“ O felicem illum diem, cum ad illud divinum animorum

It is a position wholly untenable, that according to our view of the subject, the degree of moral evil must necessarily have been as great as it is, unless an absolute restraint had been laid upon the will of man. Without entering into metaphysical discussions, it may be safely assumed, that the will is determined by the greater apparent good ; and that, when it makes a bad election in defiance of reason and judgment, the dismissal of some present uneasiness, or the possession of some present gratification, is the greatest apparent good at the time being. Had, then, their real interest, upon a full view of their present and future condition, been placed before all mankind with a clear distinctness which we can certainly conceive, because we have examples of it on record ; free-will, though exposed to less chance of error, would not have been annihilated ; and yet it would have been as morally impossible for man to choose evil in opposition to good, as we imagine it to be for the glorified inheritors

concilium cœtumque proficiscar, et cum ex hac turba et colluvione discedam !” De Senectute.

of a future state ; as it proved to be for Jesus Christ, during his adoption of human nature with its temptations and infirmities ; or, to go no farther, as it appears to be for good men when they approach the termination of their course, after a long perseverance in the habit and practice of virtue. If any one denies that this might have been, to our rational apprehensions, a better state, such a one must be led by force of consequence to deny that it would have been happier for mankind, if our first parents, and all their subsequent posterity, had withstood the temptation to which they were exposed, and remained with the liability to err, but without the error. Yet the description which might have suited the state of man, if he had never fallen into moral evil, represents a brighter scene than the face of the world, such as we now live in, can realize. “ Then there would have been no desertion on God’s part, because no apostasy on man’s : no clouds in his mind, no tempest in his breast, no tears, nor cause for any ; but a continual calm and serenity of soul, enjoying all the innocent de-

lights that God and nature could afford, and all this for ever. The whole world had been but a higher heaven and a lower; earth had been but heaven a little allayed; and Adam had been as an angel incarnate, and God all in all: and all this to be enjoyed eternally, without diminution, without period. O how great a happiness may we conceive the state of upright man to be; which nothing can resemble, nothing exceed; unless it be the happiness and bliss to which fallen man shall be restored!"*

The fact, I conceive, must be admitted, notwithstanding all the ingenious arguments which some very excellent persons have adduced to prove the contrary, that mankind is not, at present, in the best possible, or intelligibly conceivable state; and it must be equally conceded, that the Deity did not intend he should be.† The infinite wisdom of God supposes

* Hopkins's Doctrine of the two Covenants, p. 1.

† This is allowed by King, Origin of Evil. "Moral evils cannot be excused by necessity, as the natural ones, and

an infallible prescience of all future events; and must have clearly seen, that a being, liable to vice and temptation in the degree to which man was liable, would inevitably fall into it: we cannot, therefore, either argue otherwise concerning such error, than as happening with his permission; or concerning such liability, than as forming a part of his general scheme in the creation of man.* That general scheme, as is evident to reason as well as declared by revelation, was to place man in a state of probation. How we came to be placed in it, is a question more profound than our faculties can pretend to fathom. “Whether it be not beyond those faculties not only to find out, but even to understand, the whole account of this; or

those of imperfection, are. It is plain that created nature implies imperfection in the very terms of its being created; either, therefore, nothing at all must be created, or something imperfect. But the evils incident to free agents are permitted by God voluntarily, since neither the nature of things nor the good of the universe require the permission of them; i. e. the world would have been as well without them.”

* Epicurus’s dilemma (Bayle, article Marcionites; King, p. 400) is to this purpose, and has been already quoted. Chap. i.

though we should be supposed capable of understanding it, yet whether it would be of service or prejudice to us to be informed of it; it is impossible to say.”* Thus much is certain; that those who have adventured upon so deep a speculation, have left little encouragement for others to follow them on a subject of so great difficulty. Some reasoners† endeavour to account for the imperfection of man, as if it were necessary to preserve the connexion between the higher and inferior orders of created beings, or imagine‡ that God having created, out of pure benevolence, as many immaterial beings of the noblest kind as were suited to the order and convenience of his system, added others of the mixed and imperfect nature which belongs to the inhabitants of our world, since even such imperfect beings were better than none at all.

It is not to be supposed that this view of the

* Butler's Analogy, p. 107.

† Soame Jenyns' Inquiry into the Origin of Evil.

‡ Law on King's Origin of Evil, p. 393.

subject can satisfy or silence those who are inclined to argue it.* In reply it may be unanswerably urged, that, of three orders of beings, it does not appear what advantage the first and third receive from the imperfection of the second; or that indeed they might not equally exist if the second had never been, or should cease to be. Neither can it be maintained, that a world, imperfect both in its own organization, and in that of the creatures its inhabitants, formed a *necessary* part in the system of a Being whose omnipotence to prevent is as unlimited as his wisdom to foresee.

The conclusion to which Bayle† brings his free inquiry into the permission of moral evil is, that “these are unsearchable depths, in which reason is swallowed up, and only faith can support us.” This seems to convey an insinuation, that the phenomena are not only above our reason, but contrary to it: and the inevitable consequence of such a conclusion is,

* See Johnson's Review of Jenyns.

† Article, Marcionites.

that we are referred to our faith for support, with the pillar which should support us, shaken; if it is at the same time pretended, that the difficulty in hand is irreconcilable with our natural notions of justice. Premising, therefore, that all endeavours to understand an extended scheme, such as that to which the creation of man appears to belong, must be defective, whilst only that part of it is revealed to us in which we are immediately concerned: it may still be inquired, whether it is any derogation from the divine perfections of justice and goodness, of which the proofs are derived from other sources, to suppose that God has placed mankind in a state, as preparatory to another, in which all being liable to error and guilt, some were sure to prove, finally and without repentance, erring and guilty, and obnoxious to all the fatal consequences of such delinquency.

It is undeniable, that certain imperfections must belong to every created being. Omnipotence itself cannot create a being absolutely

perfect; since a being absolutely perfect must necessarily be self-existent. But there are various degrees of imperfection; various degrees of frailty in the agent, and of temptation from external objects: all this was to be determined by the will of the Creator alone; nor can we conceive any thing to control or interfere with his view as to what best coincided with his design for the human race.

In the Scripture, to which alone we can appeal with confidence, the creation of man is represented as a voluntary measure on God's part, to which we can only suppose him determined by the exercise of his attributes, justice and goodness. The account there given, though accommodated to human expression, is declarative of the intention of the Creator; who says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (i. e. endued with the distinctive faculty of reason); "and let them have dominion" over the earth.

Here, and throughout the history, God

appears to resolve, independently of all restraint or necessity,* to create a world fit for the reception of the human race, to make them the sovereign or principal inhabitants of it, and at the same time to place them on their probation; their happiness being dependent on their obedience to prescribed commands, and their disobedience being threatened with punishment.

The stress of the question, therefore, lies here: why the Deity, if his purpose was really benevolent, did not at once create man capable

* This is said in opposition to the language of King, before cited, who speaks of "God being obliged to suffer these or greater evils;" and of Jenyns, who argues to the same purpose; "It is not at all difficult to conceive, that in every possible method of ordering, disposing, and framing the universal system of things, such numberless *inconveniences might necessarily arise*, that all that infinite wisdom could do, was to make choice of that method which was attended with the least and fewest; and this not proceeding from any defect of power in the Creator, but from that imperfection which is inherent in the nature of all created things." The real extent of the *necessary imperfection* has been already stated.

of enjoying a state of perfect purity and holiness, and incapable of corrupting or forfeiting it. Now, although it is not pretended that we can see into all the reasons by which the Deity was swayed to create man a peccable being; yet there are not wanting many considerations which may serve, if not to satisfy our curiosity, at least to remove any scruples which might be raised on this ground, against the conclusions of natural religion with respect to the divine attributes.

Without denying, on the one hand, that a being free from all temptation, and unspotted by any stain of guilt, might be created, and, if created, would be an object of the highest love and admiration; yet, on the other hand, it must be conceded, that the virtue of such a being would be altogether different in kind from the virtue of one who has successfully resisted the temptations and overcome the difficulties to which a good man is exposed on earth, and who has so far contributed to form his own

character, his own moral excellence.* The one would have received, the other has acquired. The one would have succeeded by inheritance to the possession, which the other has attained by victory.

* I greatly respect the piety and humility of those Christians who will think that this passage represents the future condition of man as depending too much on his own deserts. Theirs is the safe side. Nothing is so indispensable, in all practical discourses and exhortations, as to insist on the weakness of man's endeavours, as his natural propensity is to magnify his deserts and trust to his own powers. But while the Scripture every where assures us, that no man's merit can entitle him to heaven, it likewise leaves us to understand, that "the gift of God, eternal life, through Jesus Christ," is not an unconditional gift, any more than Paradise to Adam. So is it no less certain from St. Paul, that fallen man cannot, without the aid of divine grace, form his own character to good: but it equally appears from the same source, that he must contribute to form it; and that the individuality of personal character remains, notwithstanding the "inward renewal" required of the Christian; as their peculiar style and habits of thinking remained to the inspired writers, supported, but not superseded, by inspiration. Those who do not find in Scripture this life represented as a state of *probation*, or the dispensation of the Gospel as a system of *rewards* and *punishments*, certainly read it with different eyes from mine.

If, indeed, that were the highest character of virtue, which consists in the perpetual contemplation and love of supreme excellence, an idea which was erroneously entertained by some of the ancient philosophers, and has been borrowed from them by the modern Quietists, there would be less occasion for a situation of so great difficulty and danger ; though, even according to their system, it was no inconsiderable triumph to abstract the mind from the objects with which it is surrounded, and fix it to the contemplation of unseen and ideal perfection. But as this speculative disposition of the mind towards what is abstractedly good, is found by experience to be consistent with much that is vicious in practice ; and as real practical virtue, such as we are concerned with in this life, does in fact consist in an habitual subjection of the mind to the conclusions of reason, where revelation has not been made, and where it has, to the commands issued by the Creator of the world to direct his people ; it is evident that this habitual subjection of the will must be acquired, like other habits, by repeated acts ; and to its formation must be pre-

supposed, of course, frequent opportunities of executing those acts, or the contrary. How far the nature of the heavenly rewards may require a mind previously disciplined, and how far such an established disposition as is here meant, may be even absolutely necessary to fit mankind for the enjoyment of a future state, we are not precisely informed ; but that such is the actual case, is rendered very credible by intimations which may be gathered from Scripture, as well as by numerous analogies which the economy of the present life affords.

Whatever is the explanation of the fact, it certainly appears from the positive assurance and clear examples with which we meet in Scripture, that trial, severe trial, is absolutely requisite to purify and establish the human character. The characters which the Apostle enumerates to the Hebrews as distinguished beyond others by the divine favour, are almost all of persons whose faith was testified by some great present sacrifice risked in confidence of future recompense. It would not seem to be

sufficient, that the mind should be ready to make the sacrifice; that the inclination should be pious, the confidence entire; i. e. the *good disposition* alone does not seem sufficient: but the action in proof of that disposition is really performed, the sacrifice is actually made, the suffering positively undergone: as by those who “stopped the mouths of lions, quenched “ the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the “ sword; or were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.”* In all these cases, I argue, the being actually exposed to situations of the greatest difficulty appears essential to the “obtaining “ a good report through faith.”

Let us look more minutely to the process pursued with regard to the particular instance of Abraham. The blessing destined for him was equally important and peculiar. An individual family was to be selected, from whose stock the birth of the Redeemer of mankind

* Hebrews xi.

should take place. A particular people was to be chosen, which should become depositaries of the fact of the creation, and inheritors of the knowledge and worship of the Creator, as well as of his favour and protection, accompanied with great temporal blessings and prosperity. These two signal advantages, in their nature necessarily peculiar, centered in Abraham.

However, they were not ultimately made over to him till his fitness to receive them had been proved and exhibited by several remarkable instances of obedience. His first call was attended with a command to "leave his country and his kindred, and his father's house."* This call he immediately obeyed; and it is justly remarked as a proof of his faith, that when he was summoned into a country which he should afterwards receive as his inheritance, "he went out, not knowing whither."† When the covenant made with him upon this evidence of faith was subsequently renewed, a fresh

* Gen. xii.

† Hebrews xi. 8.

proof was demanded of him, and was followed by the institution of the rite of circumcision. The ultimate ratification of the covenant was preceded by a temptation as much severer than any to which any other mortal can be exposed, as the benefits were singular which were about to be conferred : requiring him to sacrifice, by his own hand, his only son, that son through whom all the promised blessings were to be derived. The object of this command is sufficiently declared, when it is said in the opening of the narration, that “God tempted (i. e. “tried) Abraham.” And it was not till his fidelity had been displayed in this remarkable manner, that the final assurance was given : “*Because* thou hast done this thing, and hast “not withheld thy son, thine only son, in “blessing I will bless thee, &c. ; and in thy “seed shall all the nations of the earth be “blessed, *because* thou hast obeyed my voice.”* Now, that Abraham’s faith was really equal to temptation, was of course known to the Al-

* Gen. xxii. 16.

mighty before he brought it to trial. Yet he was tempted notwithstanding ; as if the actual proof and exhibition of character were a necessary part of the divine counsels, and a step which must be passed in the way to final reward.

This conclusion to which we are led by the case of Abraham is strongly corroborated by the history of Job. It is still more worthy of notice, that we find it confirmed in the example of Christ himself in his human character ; who did not enter upon his ministry till he had proved himself in actual trial superior to the temptations which the minister of evil was permitted to place in his way ; as he does, according to their respective situations, in the way of every individual who passes through the world.

The necessity of trial to render a nature constituted like that of man acceptable to God, and finally rewardable, seems decisively established by these instances, as well as by many

other intimations which may be collected from Scripture to the same effect.* Who indeed can deny that such a discipline and exhibition of character may be a preparation requisite to some ulterior purpose in man's final destination?† If the being surrounded with so much evil increases the difficulty of his situation, it must be allowed that the characters of those who overcome these difficulties are exalted in proportion. Natural and moral evil are closely connected together in their consequences as well as in their origin. The weakness of our bodily constitutions, and the many disorders to which they are liable, are both attended

* "Blessed is the man that *endureth temptation*; for, *when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life*, which the Lord has promised to them that love him." James i. 12. "Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that *ye may be tried*; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: *be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*" Revel. ii. 10. So also, ch. iii. 10, we find "the hour of temptation" spoken of, "which shall come upon all the world, to *try them that are upon the earth.*" To the same purpose is the declaration, xxi. 7, "He *that overcometh* shall inherit all things." Compare vii. 14; iii. 11, 12; xi. 26.

† See Macknight on the Epist. Essay vii. s. 4.

with temptations of their own, and give to foreign temptations additional power. Evil examples surround us on every side, and the inclination to transgress which actuates us within, is constantly deriving fresh force from external impulse. On the other hand, we both feel, and are confidently assured, that there is a power bestowed upon us equal to the existing danger, and by which it may be overcome, and the character of virtue triumphant, though far from perfect, finally established. Now, it would oppose all our natural convictions, to deny that virtue, thus proved victorious, is of a different nature, and more properly the subject of reward, than untried innocence, which has never been exposed to danger.

This being admitted, it will scarcely be thought a question within the limit of our faculties, whether the degree of moral evil which exists is that precise degree which would alone be adequate to the intended purpose, or whether the Deity might not have restrained the bad passions of the human race within stricter

bounds, and still have made life a state of probation. When the thousand different turns and relations of things on which every action depends, and the nice points of discrimination by which every character is shaded and marked out, are taken into the account, he will not be deemed wise who shall venture to assert that the proposed object could have been accomplished by a less sacrifice of good, or a smaller proportion of evil.

It is true, that when we survey the violence, the injustice, the rapacity, which have at all times prevailed in the world, and consider the malignity of some of the human passions, and the vehemence of others, we are sometimes inclined to indulge such a suspicion.* But, on the other hand, we ought to bear in mind,

* Johnson, in his masterly review of Soame Jenyns's Inquiry, has ventured to affirm, "Whether evil can be wholly separated from good, or not, it is plain that they may be mixed in various degrees; and, as far as human eyes can judge, the degree of evil might have been less, without any impediment to the good."

that these very vices give occasion to the exercise of the opposite virtues ; that, if there were less violence, less provocation, less injury, there would also be less room for meekness and forgiveness, less opening for those passive virtues, the excellence of which is proportioned to their rarity ; which are rare because they are difficult, and difficult because they find the strongest opposition from man's inward nature, and least applause from the surrounding world. Trial, in fact, is supposed, in the first formation of the abstract idea of all the virtues. Where is fortitude, without opposition ? What is prudence, but a right course among difficulties ? Patience is the daughter of affliction. Justice is most brightly exhibited amidst that complication of affairs, in which the business of the world involves mankind. We cannot possibly affirm whether the lustre would have been equal, if the labour had been less ; or what degree of attrition could be spared, without detriment to the effect. Perhaps, however, it may assist us in a subject which no thinking person will affirm to be within the grasp of our

understandings, to compare it with a case in which we have some assistance from past experience

For instance, would it not have been natural to believe, that the persecutions which the converts to Christianity underwent during the three first centuries, were a needless trial of their sincerity and constancy? God, it might be argued, knew their hearts and saw their faith. Attachment to an earthly ruler can only be shown by open risk; but the Searcher of hearts does not require the same actual displays of fidelity, since he knows beforehand who will and who will not abide the fiery ordeal. To what purpose then did he suffer such refinements of cruelty to be exercised on one side and undergone on the other, as might appear to the contemporaries a plausible proof that he did not approve or support the cause?*

* 'Οι ἐπιεικίστεροι καὶ κατὰ ποσὸν συμπαθεῖν δοκοῦντες, ὠνείδιτον πολὺ λέγοντες· ποῦ ὁ Θεὸς αὐτῶν, καὶ τί αὐτοὺς ὠνησεὺς ἢ θρησκεία, ἣ καὶ πρὸ τῆς ἐαυτῶν ἔιλοντο ψυχῆς.

Euseb. de Martyribus Lugdunensibus, Hist. v. c. 1.

reasoning, I can imagine, might have occurred in the days of Decius or Dioclesian. But to us, now, there appears an evident and intelligible design in the permission of those very martyrdoms. The zeal with which they were incurred, and the constancy with which they were endured, form the strongest links in that chain of arguments by which the certainty of the facts on which the Christian revelation rests, is supported. Had the trial been confined to a few individuals, they might have been denounced as enthusiasts; had it been less severe, their perseverance might have been termed obstinacy; had it been less universal or enduring, they might have been supposed mistaken, and in any of these cases, the most convincing evidence we at present enjoy of the truth of Christianity would be taken away: for, strong as the internal testimony assuredly is, it is more open to dispute, and comes less home to all understandings. All this, however, would not appear to the eye-witnesses of the martyrdoms: nor does it always appear to us who are familiar with the evils resulting from

human depravity, why that corruption is allowed to disturb the calm of the moral world, and deform the beauty of virtue.

II. It may possibly be argued, that it was inconsistent with divine justice to place intelligent beings, without any consent of their own, in a situation of such hazard: in which there was a moral certainty undoubtedly foreseen, that liability to err would end in transgression; that wickedness would ultimately prevail in the world to a great extent: that many would plunge themselves into final ruin, from whose fall, too, the heaviest dangers and temptations must necessarily ensue to the whole race of mankind.

This objection, if valid, renders it inconsistent with the justice of God to create any being with the power of acting well or ill, and to make him accountable for his use of such power. Therefore, it would oppose an insuperable bar to the creation of man in his present preparatory state, or in any state at all

similar to the present. For it is evident, ven if we were not told so, that the rewards and punishments awaiting mankind in a state of existence where their faculties will be altogether renewed and changed, and their mode and place of existence inconceivably different, could not possibly be comprehended by the human understanding, as it is now constituted ; and therefore could not be more clearly presented to it. Neither could the circumstances of the risk, even if intelligible, be possibly proposed to man at his entrance into life, or at any period of it that we can assign, so as to enable him to act according to a regular contract, rather than according to a positive command. Therefore we are at once driven to the regions of fancy ; the Deity might have created other imaginable natures ; but it was not conformable to his goodness to create such a being as man, and to render him responsible.

This obliges us to inquire whether there is no fallacy in the reasoning which leads to such an absolute conclusion. If we trace to their

origin the notions of justice on which it is founded, they appear to spring from the acknowledged impossibility of one man's deciding with respect to a fellow-creature, by what motive he may, under any given circumstance, be most forcibly swayed, and to which of opposite interests he may be inclined to yield. In addition to this undeniable objection against any individual, unauthorized, placing another in a situation of hazard, it is also impossible that human faculties should so appreciate the dangers of such a risk, varying in nature and degree with every different temper and circumstance, as to apportion the reward in any tolerable exactness. The conclusion, therefore, must be admitted, as far as regards the dealings of man with his fellow-men.

It cannot however, on due consideration, be pretended that the analogy is just, which applies this mode of argument to any dispensation of the Deity. For, in the first place, he is able, though creatures of limited faculties are unable, to comprehend in one view all the cir-

cumstances of the risk and of the reward, and to make the latter so heavy in the scale, as to overpay, to an infinite extent, the dangers incurred. And next, he is able to judge intuitively and infallibly of the motives by which every individual would suffer himself to be determined : and to know of a certainty beforehand, whether, if the difficulties of the course to be pursued and the penalties of failure, were proposed to the understanding, the reward must appear so to preponderate as to preclude all hesitation, and sway every man's choice invincibly. Now, that the reward is of such a nature, religion teaches us to believe ; and not revealed only, but natural religion, that genuine natural religion which points to another world to correct the inequalities of this. For, to be placed in the enjoyment of every pleasurable faculty, and at the same time to be removed from the possibility of any pain and suffering, any drawback to our happiness from fear or danger ; would be a state of very enviable and desirable existence, even if it were only awarded us here for a limited time, and

with our present imperfections. But to possess such perfect enjoyment with our faculties enlarged, and improved, and purified, and accompanied at the same time with a conscious certainty of its illimitable duration, holds out a prospect which may be truly affirmed to pass man's understanding. We surely may conceive it known to an omniscient God, that, if this prospect were actually or could possibly be made intelligible to the human race, all would instantly and joyfully embrace it, notwithstanding the difficulties that might oppose the attainment, and the dreadful evils awaiting a failure, of which a view no less clear and distinct is of course supposed to be given. But, if it could be known with certainty what the choice would be, if the liberty of choosing were actually presented to mankind, the case becomes virtually, though not formally, the same, as if the alternative of accepting or refusing existence were absolutely proposed. The objection, as was before allowed, applies conclusively to man, who can never be positively assured what alternative will appear preferable,

what motive strongest, to the mind of another : but no analogous argument can hold with respect to the Deity, who comprehends in one view the motives which would actuate the decision of man in every possible contingency. His attributes continue unimpeached, as long as his dealings with his creatures conform to the eternal principles of justice : we cannot without presumption require that he should submit his actions to its forms, to the definite contracts which the frailty, as well as the equality, of mankind obliges them to sign and seal. And on the principle upon which this argument is raised, no objection can be consistently made against the Deity's thus acting from his foreknowledge. For, if it is urged on one side against the justice of God, that he exposed mankind to a moral danger, into which he foresaw they would fall, and bring consequent ruin upon themselves ; it must be admitted on the other side, that he might place them in a situation which he foresaw they would choose, if left to the free exercise of their will.

It is every way probable, from our experience of man's nature, that undismayed by the lamentable consequences of failure, he would actually make the choice here supposed, and place himself voluntarily in the same responsible situation in which, as things are constituted, God has placed him, if the great and unbounded prospect such as we conceive heaven to offer, were laid before him. Granting it for a moment to be possible, that the punishments and rewards of the eternal world should be proposed to his view and understanding, with all the contingent circumstances of the risk ; there is every reason to believe that he would be swayed by hope rather than deterred by danger, even if the reward and punishment are supposed equal in degree. And if God had no other attribute than justice, it were sufficient to believe them *equal* ; but as he is also benevolent towards mankind, it is probable that the reward of virtue is so vastly superior in proportion to the punishment of vice, dreadful as we believe the latter to be, as would irresistibly incline the will

to embrace the offer of existence, under the terms proposed.

If, then, the Deity must have foreseen by his prescience the certainty of that election, as clearly as he foresaw that numbers of the human race would ultimately incur the evils to which their state of hazard exposes them, there is an end to all objection against the justice of God, and the question is shifted to his goodness. But no argument against the goodness of God can be maintained from the circumstances of danger in which mankind are placed, unless it were clearly proved that the present situation of the human race is ultimately productive of more misery than happiness. If the sum of happiness produced to mankind collectively be greater than the sum of misery, then it was benevolent in the Deity to give them existence, though attended with danger to all, and with ultimate misery to some. To have placed man in a situation which he himself would have chosen, though the sum total of risk was more than commensurate with

the sum total of gain, would have been just, but not benevolent; but to call into existence a larger proportion of happiness than misery, is at once benevolent and just.

Now although we cannot hold the scales which can balance so immense an account, it is contrary to every probability that happiness would not be found to preponderate, if we could: for those who assert the opposite argument are bound to point out some motive which could induce an omnipotent Being to create a world for any other purpose than that of producing a preponderating sum of final happiness, when he has in all the parts of that creation given evidence, by a vast plurality of instances, that he desired the physical happiness of man, at the same time that he required his moral obedience: in other words, that benevolence was a constituent part of his divine perfections, as well as power and justice. And that this evidence is actually given by the general appearance of the world, must be considered as a fact which has been already shown by numerous

writers beyond possibility of refutation, or even of denial.

These considerations, I think, furnish a sufficient answer to those objectors who insinuate that it cannot be reconciled to our notions of justice or goodness in the Creator, that he has placed sentient and intelligent beings, without any consent of their own, in a state of such awful responsibility.

In these circumstances, therefore, the first parents of mankind were placed; subject to command, and responsible to their Maker; with power over the impulse of the will sufficient to enable them to obey, but not so irresistibly determined to good, as to render it impossible for them to swerve into disobedience.

CHAPTER III.

*On the Goodness of God, displayed in the
Christian Dispensation.*

IT is an employment not unsuitable to the human faculties, and, we may trust, not displeasing to their divine Author, to follow the clue of reason through the intricate paths into which the moral state of mankind leads us ; and, as far as we are enabled by that feeble help,

——to assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to man.

But any such inquiry cannot fail to terminate in a feeling of just gratitude, that we, who have fallen within reach of light from the Gospel, are not left to such an uncertain road through perplexity and error ; but possess a stronger evidence than any arguments could furnish, that benevolence was actually preponderant

in the mind of the Creator in determining the situation of mankind. This evidence is derived from the dispensation unfolded in the Gospel. I will not appeal to the disposition which it authoritatively declares, but to that which it practically testifies. Whatever doubts the permission of evil might excite, whatever clouds it might appear to cast over the plan of God's moral government, are dispersed by the view which the Scriptures present of the mission and sacrifice of Christ: a pledge incontrovertible, that love and goodwill towards man did preside at the creation. When the freedom of the human will had led to transgression, and the penal causes of that transgression had placed mankind in a very difficult and laborious condition; when the principle of holiness had been corrupted, and human nature despoiled of its primitive integrity and perfection; when the admission of sin had been followed by its increase, and the natural ability to resist it, lost; here, where it might appear for a moment doubtful whether benevolence had been the object of the Deity in

creating man, and if so, whether it had not been defeated, the Christian revelation steps in to confirm our confidence, and restore us to a just view of the divine attributes. It acquaints us with a part of God's providential government, which exalts, in the highest degree, our sense of his goodness, and immediately meets the difficulty arising from the temptations to which mankind are exposed. A scheme is there unfolded to us, mercifully devised to meliorate man's condition, and obviate the fatal effects of sin, by which, when the event had proved that the human race were unequal to their trials, the evil consequences of their first transgression were, to a certain degree, averted, and it was appointed that repentance should be accepted instead of innocence, and final punishment be awarded only to the impenitent and obdurate offender.

It appears, therefore, that the Creator, whilst he foresaw* that liability to sin would be fol-

* It may be thought that I overlook an objection, in which some Christians as well as sceptics coincide, who deny the

lowed by its commission, provided at the same time a remedy for the evil thus impending over his fair creation. This he did, first, by appointing a vicarious atonement for sins repented of, and for those imperfections which the admission of moral evil has introduced, even into man's best obedience; and, secondly, by the regular dispensation of such gracious assistance as should correct and support the weakness of mankind, and enable them to fulfil those commands which, as the descendants of guilty parents, and the heirs of a sinful nature, they would otherwise be disqualified from obeying. That this power *is* bestowed, and, co-operating with their own moral faculties, enables the sincere disciples of Christ to perform the obedi-

freedom of the human will, or argue, that to *permit* and to *decree* are the same thing with absolute power. But after the repeated examinations which this difficult subject has undergone, the idea seems gradually to be prevailing more and more, that *it is within the power* of the Almighty to create a free agent: and the parallogisms of Edwards, the latest theological champion of necessity, are beginning to be seen and acknowledged. A discussion of the scriptural authorities involved in this subject would run to a length rather suited to a treatise on divinity than to the present note.

ence required of them, is distinctly declared in Scripture, and evidently seen in the conduct of those who listen to its dictates.*

* The existence of this power, and its dispensation in various degrees, according to the exigencies and merits of the individual, is perfectly intelligible. That a superior influence should assist the mind of man, is no more extraordinary than that the power of motion should be communicated to him, a power evidently derived from nothing on earth, and only referable to the Supreme Mind, or Creator: nor is the mode of its operation more inexplicable, than the operation of external objects upon our minds in the excitement of ideas; or than the communication to the limbs of the determination of the will.

For example: the relinquishment of a present desire, in conformity with the command of a superior, and for the sake of a distant object, requires a double mental exertion of considerable difficulty: viz. to overcome the present inclination, and for that purpose to bring the future object nearer. Now, it is evident that the human mind, while viewing any immediate object of attainment, may be endued with a greater or less degree of power both to see that object in a just light, and to advance into closer view the future object, whether of hope or fear. That these are not of any fixed dimensions, but vary in their importance according to the medium through which the mind surveys them, is manifest from the different degree of relative importance they assume, before or after attainment. Crimes are pigmies before commission; they become giants afterwards. Motives which are trivial while the judgment is overbalanced by desire, become of paramount

To those, therefore, who receive the mysteries declared in the Gospel, as a disclosure of the counsels of God relating to mankind, as far as it concerns mankind that they should be

influence when it is restored to its equilibrium. Our first parents, who were bold under the pressure of temptation, hid their faces when they had become conscious of disobedience.

It is in that wavering state of the judgment which precedes the determination of the will, that the divine influence may be presumed to act, in assisting the mind to reduce conflicting objects to their just size, to appreciate rightly the forbidden object, and to approximate the distant recompense. This requires an exertion of intellect, which it is easy to suppose man may be enabled to make with more or less success, according to the power bestowed upon him. For instance : our ablest metaphysicians are of opinion, that man cannot, with his present intellectual faculties, embrace two objects at the same time, or reason without the intervention of words ; but we can easily imagine this possible to higher intellectual faculties, or that the faculties of man *might* be so enlarged as to enable him to reason upon any object without the representative sign, or to compare two objects *at once*, without requiring the aid of memory. In the same manner, let it be supposed that he cannot, naturally, so forego things present, or so clearly apprehend things future, as to obey the latter rather than the former. But such a power *may be* bestowed upon him by the same Being who gave him mind. And it *may be* bestowed upon him in greater or less degree, in the way of reward for the right exercise of the power he does possess

disclosed, is opened a most consistent scheme of moral government, in which the union of justice and goodness in the divine nature is consummated. They learn as certain, what reason before showed them to be probable, that this earthly state of existence is preparatory to a superior state for which they are destined after its close: God having chosen, for reasons which he does not reveal, that mankind should display their characters in a previous state before they reached their final destination, and should attain the enjoyment of a future and more glorious existence by labour, exertion, and obedience. But, if this life is preparatory, and if that preparation is to consist in the trial of virtue, vice becomes the touchstone by which virtue is proved, and the possibility of falling is necessary to show the strength of those who stand. In the very non-naturally. And consequently, as a punishment for the wrong exercise of that power, it *may be* diminished, withdrawn in various degrees, or totally denied.

There is nothing in this supposition unintelligible, nothing, as it appears to me, inconsistent with Scripture or with philosophy.

tion of a state of trial, evil must be included. If there were no moral evil, i. e. no temptation to vice and wickedness in the world, the world would certainly be infinitely happier, but it would no longer be a situation of moral trial. Or if, while evil still existed, man had been irresistibly determined to choose the good, a case which, as was before allowed, it is very possible to conceive; the moral character would have remained undisciplined, untried, and unimproved; moral liberty being essential to a system of which moral trial is the object, and retributive justice the consummation.

God, however, confessedly foresaw, not only that the possibility of erring would lead into actual error, but that the moral evil thus let into the system, would diffuse an universal moral weakness, would introduce a general imperfection, and, in addition to the large account of total failures, cause many partial falls, which might, in the course of years, be repented of and recovered. To reconcile, therefore, his own holiness with his plan for the probation of

mankind, instead of human weakness, he accepts the perfection of Christ. This does not alter the nature of life, as a state of trial, but by the opportunity of repentance thus allowed it renders the trial less perilous. At the same time that the various scenes and changes experienced in the world, are well adapted to prove the character and discipline the mind, a merciful and wise provision diminishes the extent of the risk, and lightens the difficulty to which man is subjected by those temptations. He is at best frail and imperfect, and, it might seem, unworthy of a superior state; instead, then, of that frailty and imperfection, God declares his acceptance of Christ's perfect righteousness, as having by his voluntary sacrifice redeemed mankind from the consequences of their guilt, and opened to them a way of eternal happiness. How far retrospective this benefit may be towards those who lived antecedently to the death of Christ, or how far it may improve the condition of those who have not yet received the mercies and obligations of the Gospel, we can only conjecture by analogy

from the goodness shown in the whole dispensation. The true believer, however, is not only set free from the consequences of those frailties of which he is conscious, and with which the existence of moral evil has stained every character ; but the relation to the divine Being, which the Gospel opens to his view, proposes to him purer and higher duties than any with which natural reason could have acquainted him, and exalts the nature of his virtues in proportion to the brighter lustre of the object towards which they are directed.

With respect to the atonement, should it be further demanded, why, if not the occasional admission of guilt, but the irreclaimable character of wickedness were destined to final punishment : why, under this, which is declared to be the real purpose of the Deity, he could not have pardoned sin, upon the repentance of the offender, without requiring an atonement incomprehensible to us in its nature and efficacy : the answer has been repeatedly given, and, we might believe, satisfactorily given by

various excellent writers, in just and profound reflections on the nature of sin, and of the divine perfections. The question, indeed, seems to assume that goodness, or benevolence, is the single attribute of the Deity. But benevolence, even in man, forms an amiable, but not a perfect character. To complete the divine perfections, justice and holiness must be indispensably and inseparably united to benevolence : and justice, it would appear, required the vicarious atonement which goodness devised ; and which opens to those who, having erred, repent of their errors, and reform them, a way to the indulgence of that Being whose purity would revolt from the presence of unexpiated guilt.

To show that this idea of the necessity of vicarious atonement is analogous to many circumstances which the course of human life, and conduct, and opinion, presents to our view, would be only to detail again arguments which have been repeatedly urged with all the force of which they are capable.* Repentance,

* Of late writers, see particularly Archb. Magee, Disc. I.

I would briefly observe, may fit a person for the acceptance of reward, but cannot, in itself, deserve reward; it cannot expiate an offence, though it may render the offender worthy of expiation; it may excite compassion, but it cannot efface a crime. This holds true in all our intercourse with one another, and in the common concerns of man with man. Though we excuse one who has injured us, on his regret and contrition, our forgiveness of his offence does not restore him to the place he held in our esteem, when innocent. The commission of a flagrant crime we never entirely pardon. The reformation of the criminal does not expiate his guilt in the eyes of society; his modest deportment and evident contrition may engage our pity, and incline us towards lenity and favour; but, in spite of this feeling, his offence has raised a kind of barrier between him and the rank from which he fell, and he is still viewed as a person to whom a stain is attached, which it is impossible to efface, either from his character or our recollection. If this is the effect of a crime once committed, upon the

opinion of man, in the case of the Supreme Being it will appear a necessary consequence of the excellence of his nature and perfections. With man, the lapse of time and succession of events weakens, if it does not obliterate, the memory of the past; but to the view of God the past is ever present; and the guilt once contracted remains in his sight uneffaced, and in all its original heinousness.

Those writers, among whom some of considerable learning and piety might be enumerated, who have held that repentance and reformation are in themselves a necessary restoration to the divine favour, have been misled, by the abundant evidences of the benevolence of God, to transfer that inclination towards the happiness of his creatures which is uniformly displayed in things indifferent, to circumstances in which it could not be consulted without a violation of the other attributes, which are equally essential to the character of an all-perfect Being. In things morally indifferent, and bearing no connexion with the character of

man as a moral agent, it is decisively proved that the Deity has shown an exclusive regard to the happiness of the human race. But in the different effects of different sorts of moral conduct upon the well-being of individuals, and of mankind at large, he has taken occasion to display his justice too; and has given us reason to conclude, by an analogy drawn from the present to a future dispensation, that the punishment incurred by guilt is not necessarily averted by repentance. This appears, not only in the instances already mentioned, of the loss of character and reputation, which might be referred to the fallible judgment of man; but in the consequences which follow vice, by the natural constitution of things, and are, therefore, to be argued upon as actual testimonies of the divine counsels. And these consequences, we find, usually continue, long after the moral character which caused them has been changed; and the loss of fortune and health is not repaired by repentance of that ill conduct which originally forfeited them.

The analogy, therefore, which we can derive from the course of things here, gives us no reason to imagine that God either has, or would have, forgiven the violation of his moral laws, by any departure from the holiness which belongs to his perfections. "Some other intercession, some other sacrifice, some other atonement, it appears, must be made for sin, beyond what man himself is capable of making, before the purity of the divine justice can be reconciled to his manifold offences. The doctrines of Revelation coincide then, in every respect, with the original anticipations of nature,"* when they assure us, that God in appointing an atonement as an instrumental mean for the general restoration of repentant and reformed transgressors to his favour, has satisfied his holiness at the same time that he has consulted his benevolence: and wherever this revelation of his counsels has been hitherto explained, he has also given the strongest discouragement to vice, by declaring its repug-

* Smith's Moral Sentiments, three first editions, p. 206.

nance to his nature ; and the highest inducement to virtue, by showing the perfect purity, either inherent or imputed, which his presence demands.

This view of the situation of man, and of the attributes of the Creator, which the Christian revelation unfolds, is complete and consistent ; and, while it accounts for all the phænomena of our state, contains but two points that are beyond our reason, and none that are contrary to it. It is above our reason, why we should be subjected to so much hazard ; it is also above our reason, how the sacrifice of Christ should expiate human transgressions. But it is not, therefore, contrary to reason, that God should have chosen to create a being who should form and display his character in a probationary state, before he was admitted to the scene of his ulterior destination : or that he should mercifully have appointed a mean, by which, consistently with his own justice, the risk incurred by that being should be diminished. Admit this ; and the moral world, which is sometimes

treated as a scene of confusion, in which an unequal contest between reason and passion, between duty and transgression, is constantly carried on, will appear a comprehensive plan of harmony and intelligible design.

For reasons of which we are confessedly ignorant, God placed us in a state, not of ultimate perfection, but of preparatory probation. To the formation and developement of human character, which was the object of this probation, the existence of moral evil, and the possibility of falling into it, became necessary. The degree of criminality in which some part of the human race is consequently involved, places the whole race in a situation of so much difficulty, that a total escape from the general contagion is rendered impossible. It follows, therefore, that where the inducements to offend were so powerful, if no provisional remedy had been applied to cases of inferior or repentant offenders, the system might have appeared so far defective, as to be irreconcilable with the belief of the goodness of God, which we derive

from other sources, though not contrary to the rules of strict justice. Revelation, however, sets aside this difficulty; and acquaints us, that the appointment of this provisional remedy was coeval with the foundation of the system itself; and that the disorders consequent upon the introduction of moral evil, have been all along accompanied and palliated by a vicarious atonement, which reconciles the forgiveness of man to the perfection of the divine attributes, and renders the final happiness of those whose moral character has ultimately borne the test required of them, no less consistent with the justice, than it is agreeable to the benevolence of God.

Against this uniform and comprehensive scheme nothing can be advanced, except the presumptuous inquiry, why we were not created heirs to an immortality of gratuitous happiness. This would doubtless have been an act of pure benevolence, highly preferable, as far as we can imagine, to the majority of mankind: but surely it is not pretended that man can justly claim such an existence from his

Creator. It would be equally reasonable to arraign the goodness of God, that we are not born possessed of all the strength of manhood, without the delay and dangers of a tedious infancy: or that our intellectual faculties are not bestowed upon us perfect, instead of requiring so long a course of industrious culture.

It is remarkable indeed, that the arguments which arraign the divine goodness with the difficulties which embarrass virtue on earth, go in direct contradiction to all that we see around us of the divine œconomy. According to that plan, nothing, if I may so speak, is done *immediately*: all is brought about by the instrumentality of means. The world is not peopled by immediate creation. The food by which mankind are supported, is produced by a series of laborious exertions, which constitute no small share of their employment. The human mind itself is possessed of no stores by nature, but acquires whatever it has the capacity of acquiring, by pains and cultivation. All these dispensations are akin to the discipline

which the human character undergoes, in its progress through the world. Why is not man created in perfect vigour, and able to perform without the waste of a tedious interval, the purposes to which he is destined? Why does his strength require to be continually recruited? Why is he not gifted from his birth, or by inspiration, with the knowledge requisite to his condition? Why do so many actually leave the world, without having ever attained any considerable degree of that knowledge? These are questions, which, when we venture to inquire respecting divine ordinances, we might ask with the same justice, as when we ask why the human character is formed for a future state by previous discipline in this.

Again: should it be alleged, that if the object of man's residence on earth is to form and prove the character, in preparation for another state, this world, so full of confusion and wickedness, is ill adapted to serve for such a preparation; the objection must be refuted by an appeal to our own practical experience,

in a case remarkably similar. For who would not believe, previous to experience, that the same argument was applicable to the early stages of the earthly existence of mankind? In this outset of life, the helplessness of infancy is succeeded by the perverse waywardness of childhood; childhood is succeeded by the headstrong passions and follies of youth; and the process of education exhibits a continual conflict of indolence against exertion, of licentiousness against discipline, and extravagance against reason. Yet in the midst of this apparent lawlessness and confusion, the character is formed, and the individual is matured, and enters upon the duties of a more advanced period of his existence; which he discharges well or ill, and with good or bad consequences to himself, according to the use he has made of his early life and education. To this order of things the whole of man's preparatory state bears a striking analogy. He is prone to error; he is assaulted by temptation; he is hindered by his own weakness, and impeded by obstacles thrown in his way by others; he is urged

and agitated by contrary passions, conflicting wishes, fears and desires. And it is in this tumultuous scene that the moral character expands, and is decided to good or evil; and ultimately takes its place among the innumerable gradations which form the connecting chain between the best and the worst of the human race.

In fact, the very viciousness of the world renders it a state of virtuous discipline, in the degree it is, to good men; and so highly exalts the dignity of those who subject their rebellious nature to the guidance of reason or superior obligation, and look beyond the business or concerns of the present state towards that final destination, of which this world is only the entrance. For, in proportion as the dross is impure, the metal is refined; and if the admission of evil into the system sinks a vast multitude to a very low state of degradation, it raises the character of virtue to an elevation, which a state affording no temptation or opportunity of failure could never have attained. A

being, before whom the views of his real interest had been always so clearly displayed, as to render it morally impossible that he should swerve from them, would not appear so fit a subject of reward, as one conscious of his free agency, sensible of opposite desires, swayed by alternate interests, with passion to impel and reason to direct him. A man thus struggling against the vicious habits with which he is surrounded, is worthier of celestial spectators, than the great admiration of former ages, the man struggling against misfortunes. It is a sufficient justification of the phenomena of the moral world, that the established system of things exhibits such spectacles, and raises man to so sublime a height, superior to the suggestions of the depraved part of his nature, and to the tyranny of bad example. And it must not be omitted, in conclusion, that the obvious effect of such a state as Revelation represents the life of man to be, is to introduce, in the person who acts up to the faith and precepts of Revelation, that sort of connexion between man and his Creator, of dependance

and obedience on the side of man, and of regard and assistance on the part of God, which we conceive will be renewed and perfected in the life to come.

CHAPTER IV.

On the Existence of natural Evils, and those of civil Life.

IF we turn from the moral to the natural state of man, we find on that side also a body of evil, which is seized upon as a strong hold by the opponents of the goodness of the Deity. The extent, indeed, of these evils is differently estimated, according, it would seem, to the natural temperament of the person who contemplates them. While Dr. Paley, whose writings bear strong testimony to his sanguine and cheerful mind, maintains that they hold no proportion to the mass of human enjoyment;*

* Paley's Nat. Theol. p. 499. "It is a happy world, after all. The air, the earth, the water, teem with delighted

another eye sees through another medium, and at once the picture is reversed. "There is no day nor hour," it is said, "in which, in some regions of the many-peopled globe, thousands of men, and millions of animals, are not tortured to the utmost extent that organized life will afford. Let us turn our attention to our own species. Let us survey the poor; oppressed, hungry, naked, denied all the gratifications of life, and all that nourishes the mind. Let us view man, writhing under the pangs of disease, or the fiercer tortures that are stored up for him by his brethren."* A less prejudiced writer expresses his belief, "that even among those whose state is beheld with envy, there are many who, if at the end of their course, they were put to their option, whether, without any respect to a future state, they would repeat all the pleasures they have had in life, upon condition to go over again

existence. In a spring noon, or a summer evening, on whichever side I turn my eyes, myriads of happy beings crowd upon my view."

* Godwin, p. 455.

also also all the same disappointments, the same vexations, and unkind treatment from the world, the same secret pangs and tedious hours, the same labours of body and mind, the same pains and sicknesses; would be far from accepting them at that price.”* Dr. Johnson has even declared, that the evils of life preponderate in so great a degree, as to render the subject incomprehensible to human faculties.†

* Wollaston, *Relig. of Nature* delin. p. 390. His arguments are well turned aside by Balguy, *Div. Benev.* asserted p. 3. Cicero makes Cato affirm the same of himself: “*Si quis deus mihi largiatur, ut ex hac ætate repuerascam, et in cunis vagiam, valde recusem: nec verò velim, quasi decurso spatio, a calce ad carceres revocari.*” Seneca argues, “*hanc vitam, si scientibus daretur, neminem accepturum.*” These observations may be true, but do not prove the point. Whatever pleasures we may have enjoyed in our past lives, we expect little from their repetition, which would want the zest of novelty and variety. I do not think it fair to allege the unwillingness of mankind to part with life, as a proof of the actual value of it; because this may as often arise from the fear of dying, as the delight of living. Law, however, Hutcheson, Balguy, and Paley, all use that argument as satisfactory.

† Review of Soame Jenyns.

The difficulty, however, great as these authors represent it, lies not so much in the evils themselves, as in their partial distribution. In this point of view, the natural no less than the moral appearance of the world is unaccountable, unless taken in connexion with another. The existence of any partial evil, which can neither be avoided by prudence nor mitigated by virtue, is inconsistent with the perfect goodness we attribute to the Deity, under the notion of this world being a final state. In that case it ought either to be made up to the sufferer by compensation, which we do not always find; or to be apportioned exactly to the degree of vice, which is equally irreconcilable with experience.

The usual answer to this objection, drawn from the course of general laws, rendering "partial evil universal good," does not sufficiently obviate the difficulty to which it is applied. For why, it may be asked, should the Deity have appointed such general laws as must confine him to imperfection? General

laws are necessary to the moral government of the world, in connexion with a future state, because moral government could not consist with free agency, under the plan of peculiar interposition. But if a future state is already, by the supposition, removed from the argument, there ceases to be any objection to a particular providence ; or rather, it is the only mode by which the world can be impartially governed.

Neither is it satisfactory to say of these evils, that they are only evils of imperfection. It is true, that “ no anatomist ever discovered a system of organization calculated to produce pain and disease ; or, in explaining the parts of the human body, ever said, ‘ This is to irritate, this to inflame.’ ”* But it is equally true, that no inquiry has ever yet shown to common reason, why the *natural* state of man is bettered by being subject to disorder and pain, or why such imperfections are necessary to the exist-

* Paley’s Theol. p. 502.

ence of our system, or to the happiness of any other. We are reduced to the alternative of referring all to our ignorance, or to the more reasonable method of turning our view from the present spectacle of labour and suffering, to its distant and moral effect upon the mind and conduct. Then only, when this light is shed upon the system, are we enabled to contemplate it with satisfaction and complacency.

No errors are more repulsive to honest inquirers, than a tendency to admit too little, or an attempt to prove too much. If we espouse the favourite propositions of Dr. Paley, and allow, without limitation, the conclusion which he [draws, that God wished the happiness of mankind in creating the world;* an opponent may fairly allege the irreconcilableness of such a wish with existing appearances, and we may find the goodness of the Deity supported at the expense of his wisdom. It is as

* The basis of his argument in his *Moral Philosophy* and *Natural Theology*.

impossible to account for natural as for moral evil, without considering this state as a state of discipline and preparation. Arguments without this basis may perplex, but will never convince the understanding, The more moderate proposition, that the Deity wished the happiness of mankind in this world, as far as it might contribute to their final happiness in another, is a proposition confirmed by the innumerable benevolent provisions by which the goodness of the Deity is maintained, and at the same time is consistent with the many instances of pain, privation, and sorrow, which abound on every side.

The machinery of human life is complicated and intricate. The course of things, ordained by its divine Governor, is sustained by the operation of naturally implanted inclinations, as the desire of enjoyment, the love of ease, and the hope of distinction. The part which these inclinations perform has been declared already. But, that springs so powerful, when once set in motion, may do no more than is required,

not overthrow the farther and more important destination of man, a counter-movement becomes necessary to regulate their aberrations and restrain the inequalities of their action : and the natural evils at present under consideration, the abruptness of hopes by the separation of friends, the destruction of promised pleasures by the interference of sickness and suffering, and the various loads which age and infirmity lay on nature, perform this purpose, and keep things in order. Such pains, anxieties, and privations, as are incident to the human race collectively, are evidently the means which the Deity has appointed to detach mankind from the pleasures, and occupations, and concerns which relate to this world only, and are ill fitted to prepare their minds for that superior state of which this is the forerunner : and even strong as the corrective undeniably appears, experience shows us that it is not more severe than the nature of the case requires. Nothing to a theoretical inquirer would appear more disproportionate than the punishments with which, in well-civilized com-

munities, offences against private property and the public peace are visited ; yet all the disgrace and misery which is heaped upon the head of convicted guilt, is unable to overcome, or do more than to restrain, the stream of criminality. So, if we merely saw the pain and wretchedness, which is not the consequence of intemperate courses or guilty luxury alone, but to which all men are liable, and which for the most part they actually suffer in the course of their lives, we might naturally suppose that the measure exceeded the occasion. But if we turn our eyes upon the world, we soon perceive that all this discipline is scarcely sufficient to make men look beyond the present day and the present state of things : that the pleasures of life are earnestly sought, notwithstanding the disappointment with which the search is often repaid : and that immediate enjoyment is the main spring of most persons' conduct, notwithstanding the accidents to which it is exposed, and the acknowledged shortness of its duration.

I. To apply these remarks to an evil which

is inherent in the system, and must be necessarily inherent in any system, that was not intended to be final, and therefore perfect : no inevitable evil strikes a deeper blow against human happiness, than the separation of friends by death. But in a religious point of view, the advantageous consequences resulting from this dispensation, are a matter of daily experience. It is an evil useful in its apprehension, its approach, and its consummation. A conviction of the precarious tenure by which human attachments are held together, cannot perhaps be truly said to moderate their violence ; it is more consonant to observation to allow that such a conviction increases their tenderness, whilst it diminishes their transport. But it preserves in minds imbued with that piety which it is the nature of tender attachments to cherish, a constant dependence upon the superior Power, to whose favour the valued possession is owing, and on whose counsels its continuance depends. Thus far the apprehension of death is salutary. And when it actually arrives, the mind is not only alienated from the surrounding scene, and

disposed by the pressure of immediate sorrow to place its happiness on a more permanent foundation ; but the survivors are admonished of their own mortality in a way so powerfully impressive, that no causes have been found to contribute in a nearly equal degree to effect that difficult change of conduct, which it is often impossible not to desire, but vain to expect, while the course of prosperity is smooth and even. Considered with reference to this world only, the separation of friends, whose innocent enjoyments depend on one another, is simply and gratuitously evil ; but considered with reference to a future state of existence, no part of our preparation is more salutary or effectual.

II. The other evil generally affecting and pervading our system, is pain. Now pain, to a certain extent, is the instrument of our preservation ; an agency by which it is probable that more good is attained with less violence or disorganization to the system at large, than any other plan would have afforded. As, how-

ever, it is justly argued, that the Deity had the happiness of the human species in view, because he made the desire of pleasure their exciting object more commonly than the dread of pain ; so it must be allowed, that if he had placed us here in the best possible state, he would have made pleasure rather than pain the instrument of our preservation. Neither can it be denied, that more pain is mixed up in the system, than can be justly referred to this salutary precaution ; inasmuch as many disorders are incident to the human frame, against which no precaution is able to guard. Here, as in our former case, we account for the dispensation, when we see it in a moral view. Long and painful illnesses are among the means by which a continued sense of imperfection and dependence is preserved, as a necessary check upon the freedom of our choice and actions ; by which an attachment to this world is weakened, and habits of piety are sometimes generated and sometimes confirmed. A person cannot have seen much of the world, without recollecting instances of strong moral impres-

sions, and lasting alterations of character, which may be referred to this original. The house of mourning and the bed of sickness is at once the theatre and the school of virtue. The virtue, too, which is there displayed and learnt is of a different species from that which is demanded and exhibited in the active scenes of life: and as it is not compensated by the same reward, and cannot be excited by the same hope of human approbation or applause, it becomes necessary that there should be a provision for its exercise, if it is determined that man should be placed in a state of trial. Those sublime and difficult virtues which consist in suffering, though they seldom fail of admiration when observed and known, are in their nature silent and unobtrusive; and so far are purer and of a less dubious source than those social virtues of which man is both the object and the judge, and often the rewarder.

Whilst in these considerations we find a reason, which can no where else be satisfactorily

supplied, for the existence of positive evils at all in the creation of a Being of perfect goodness; it must not be forgotten, that, even in the most afflictive visitations, the benevolence of the Deity does not leave itself without witness. I allude to those alleviations of illness, and consolatory mitigations of suffering and even of death, which have been acutely observed and stated by many excellent writers.* If the natural world, examined as a system perfect in itself, must perplex the reasoner and disappoint the philosopher; still it is far from displaying the chaotic confusion which some writers have delighted in describing. Like the face of the country in spring, it shows some desolate spots among many promises of vegetation; and contains within itself the seeds of perfection active and growing, which a less fickle season will mature.

* See in particular Paley, *Theol.* p. 498. It adds considerably to the force as well as to the interest of what he there observes concerning the alleviations of pain, that the chapter was actually written during the intermissions of an acute disorder, as appears from Meadley's *Memoirs*.

In addition to these natural evils, hitherto considered, and to which the whole species are equally liable, there remain others, as poverty, dependence, servitude, which it has been usual to designate generally as the evils of civil life. They consist of two classes—those which in opulent states of society press heaviest upon the inferior stations; and those which in rude and unsettled countries press more uniformly upon the whole population. Of the former class, it would be uncandid to argue that they arise from arbitrary and human distinctions; since it has been affirmed already that these distinctions spring up inevitably from the nature of man, and that the poverty and inferiority complained of as consequent upon them, has its origin in a principle interwoven with the human constitution, and invariably tending to the same result. These evils, then, must be allowed their real force, and we must acquiesce in a belief which is warranted by many proofs, that they are the consequence of such general laws as are more beneficial to the world at large, that is, contribute more to the happiness

and improvement of man collectively, than more partial enactments could have been contrived to do, consistently with the general design of the Deity, which must always be kept in view, respecting the inhabitants of our globe. Thus, though it may be objected, that poverty or subordination of classes are not necessary, like the positive evils of pain or death, to our trial or moral amendment; yet are they beneficial in another point of view, as being the essential consequence of that system of things which best contributes to man's improvement on the whole. Many proofs comprehensible to us why this supposition seems to agree with the actual fact, have been already adduced in treating of the wisdom of the Deity.

The inquiry principally connected with the present consideration of his goodness, relates to the extent of the evils now alluded to, and of their mitigations. And into this inquiry I am more particularly bound to enter, from the line of argument I embraced throughout the former Book. The first view of that principle

of population, the effects of which branch out so widely, appears to many, as was before remarked, like an anomaly in the system of divine administration; a provision for entailing upon mankind much laborious poverty, and some painful indigence. But in a system not pretending to be final or perfect, evil must be expected; it is sufficient for the wisdom of the Deity that the evil is overbalanced by advantage upon the whole; and it is sufficient for his goodness, that it is limited in extent, and moderate in degree. From a prosecution of the subject I think it will appear in fact, that the extent of the evils of civil life is much more circumscribed, and that their alleviations are much more effectual, than a partial survey might incline us to imagine.

I. It must have been already evident that I am far from espousing the opinion that happiness is diminished by civilization, or from denying that it is the general tendency of education to increase both its quantity and its purity. Nor have I any doubt, that, upon the whole,

the happiest, as well as the most perfect human beings, are to be found among the best educated men in the most civilized society. Their capacity of happiness is larger, being increased by all their powers of intellectual enjoyment; and the nature of that happiness is purer, because it depends upon objects least liable to change, and least injured by the admixture of alloy. But the capability, is not the possession, of enjoyment. And could the individual who is the best educated in the most refined community be discovered and pointed out, it need not be said how infinitely the chances are against *that* being the happiest man, to whom the most multiplied sources of happiness are open.

From what cause it arises that the actual enjoyment of happiness is much more equally distributed, than the power of attaining it would at first sight appear to authorize, will be obvious to all who have pursued what has been emphatically called "the proper study of mankind." This study acquaints us, that

affluence, and civil distinctions, the desire of which is so natural as to be the chief source of human industry and prosperity, are contingent circumstances no more necessary to happiness than they are essential to virtue. The vulgar, indeed, imagine, and with some reason, when they are so earnestly sought, that these are the very constituents of happiness; but the philosopher knows that they contribute little towards it; and the possessor often feels too sensibly that they cannot confer it. That elastic adaptation of the mind to its permanent situation, which we call the power of habit, equalizes the apparent inequalities of fortune; and blunts the edge of imagined hardships whilst it depreciates the value of what we are used to consider luxurious indulgences. Those who commiserate the condition of the industrious poor, are for the most part persons, who, born in a different sphere, and accustomed to a different manner of living, have learnt to consider the superfluities of their station no less important to human nature ge-

nerally, than use has rendered them to their own enjoyment.* They proceed, too, upon an assumed uniformity of dispositions and tastes, which observation immediately confutes: and which, if it did exist, must give a death-blow to the business of the world. It would be scarcely more unreasonable for the members of one profession to pity those devoted to another, than to suppose that the degrees of satisfaction of which life admits, were confined to the well educated or affluent. Every one perceives that the sedentary pursuits of literature

* "To estimate the real situation and feelings of another, we must divest our minds, if possible, of every idea they have imbibed; and undertake the still more difficult task of infusing into them the ideas of the person, of whose situation we pretend to judge. For, happiness or misery in this world seems to depend chiefly upon the relative proportion of what is usually called good or evil, which befalls us, compared with what we have been in the habit of partaking. A poor chimney-sweeper will eat, drink, and be merry, will feel the excess of joy and happiness, in situations where a man of delicacy and refinement would die of horror, vexation, and disgust." Weyland's Observations on Mr. Whitbread's "Poor Bill," p. 23.

and learned occupations, in which one man places his pride and pleasure, would be unsatisfactory to another, though born in an equal station, and gifted with equal talents, but employing them on other objects. Yet there is not a greater difference, in external appearance, between the comforts of the peasant and the affluent, than between the accommodation of the studious recluse, and of those who follow the profession of arms. Habit, which reconciles the soldier to his tent and the sailor to his deck, reconciles the peasant to his cabin.* The want of those superfluities which are supplied by affluence, is as little distressing to the poor, as the mere possession of them can be satisfactory to the rich; and a probable assurance that the necessaries of life will not be wanting, is the only thing which can be

* “*Nihil miserum est, quod non in naturam consuetudo perduxit.*” Seneca ad Helv. “*Paulatim enim voluptates sunt, quæ necessitate cæperunt.*” He exemplifies this in a manner much to the present purpose from the customs of the Germans.

justly considered an indispensable condition of comfortable existence.

This force of habit is spontaneously recognised by the common feelings of mankind. Even a beggar is the object of their occasional relief, but seldom of their habitual commiseration. No one doubts that he has satisfactions of his own ; that his lot is made easy, perhaps endeared to him by custom ; and that cheerfulness may dwell under tattered garments and a squalid mien. The object of our pity is not the common soldier, but Belisarius reduced to beggary ; the man who begins to labour towards the close of a life of ease ; or who is fallen into indigence, after having been pampered by superabundance. This man we visit with kindness and compassion, even though his fall is probably the punishment of imprudence, and he is still provided conveniences which would be superfluous to one who had been born and educated in an humbler station. But it is not with his condition, but with his change of condition, that we sympathize.

There is, indeed, a description of the inferior ranks, which, if it were just, would forbid any man to sit easy under the advantage of fortune and education. It speaks of the "peasant or artisan, as rising early to his labour, and leaving off every night weary and exhausted. He never repines, but when he witnesses luxuries he cannot partake, and that sensation is transient: and he knows no diseases but those which rise from perpetual labour. The range of his ideas is scanty; and the general train of his sensations comes as near as the nature of human existence will admit, to the region of indifference. This man is in a certain sense happy. He is happier than a stone." *

If this were an impartial description of the labouring ranks among the civilized states of Europe, human life would cease to be what we profess that it is, a state of discipline. But it is the description of a variety, not of a genus. It may be possible, no doubt, among our native peasantry to meet with those who have scarcely

* Political Justice, p. 444, vol. ii.

extended their ideas beyond the field they have cultivated or the spot where they were born. But as poverty is a thing separate from indigence, so is this sort of stupidity from poverty. It is not its general character, but either the result of individual ill fortune, or neglected opportunities. Among the inferior ranks, there is no want of intelligence upon the subject with which they have to do ; no indifference about affairs within the range of their observation and interest. In conversation with their equals they show a mind active, though uninformed, generally intent upon some subject of common concern, and often less trifling than that of a station far above them. Whether or not it can be true of a negro slave, that “ he slides through life with something of the contemptible insensibility of an oyster,”* need not be here inquired ; it certainly is not true of the inhabitants of any country where Christianity is preached and understood. Other religions, encouraging the ignorance by which they flourish, contract the human mind : but it is the peculiar nature of

* Godwin, p. 446, vol. ii.

Christianity, to awaken energy, to inform and to enlighten ; to raise, in short, the standard of human intellect. It effects this not only by the advantages of public worship and instruction, which is in itself a species of education ; but by turning the mind towards its own operations, and teaching it to reflect, to compare, to combine, and to reason. The man who has attained just views upon a few important subjects, is elevated considerably above dull indifference : and that this is the case in general with the labouring classes in a Christian country, may be doubted by the philosopher, but is familiarly known by those who have entered into the habits and feelings of the poor.

If, then, it be undeniably true, that comparative happiness cannot be weighed or measured according to any definite rule, we must judge of it by the index of the countenance and the expression of the tongue. A reference to this test gives us a very different result respecting the equality of enjoyment, from that produced by a survey of external circum-

stances.* The countenances of the labouring poor are not depressed by care ; their language is not that of repining or discontent. In their daily intercourse with each other there is as much cheerfulness, in their occasional conviviality as much mirth, as can be found among their richer neighbours. The man of refined taste may find fault with this mirth, and call it turbulent and noisy : but so will a circle of polished Frenchmen appear to a well-bred Englishman ; and so to a Turk will that English circle which the Frenchman considers dull and phlegmatic. A party of rustic labourers, taking their customary meal under the shelter of a tree, may seem an object of wretchedness to those who make their own feelings the only standard of comparison ; but will be less pitied by those who have compared the hilarity which accompanies their meal, and the activity which succeeds it, with the ennui,

* “ *Aspice quanto major sit pars pauperum, quos nihilo notabis tristiores sollicitioresque divitibus ; imo nescio an eò lætiores sint quo animus eorum in pauciora dstringitur.*”
Sen. ad Helv.

formality, and lassitude which so frequently attend the banquets of the rich and great. As to luxurious living, few can fail to know by their own experience how entirely such a taste is formed by habit, and how habit blunts the sensibility to such gratifications. It might be truly affirmed, that the peasant has usually more actual enjoyment from the satisfaction of his hunger by the most frugal fare, with an appetite sharpened by air and labour, than those receive whose table is regularly spread with sumptuous variety. There are, indeed, evident proofs of this: for we deem it a proof of great sensuality, if the rich man reckons the appeasing his appetite among his serious pleasures, which the poor man seldom fails to do: and the occasional gratification which he enjoys from a meal more elaborate than his usual fare, is a clear accession of gain to his advantage. He may not perhaps think this. He sees the value which is commonly set upon the luxuries of life, and can only conceive it founded in reality; and what he has tasted of them have come to him recommended by the

adventitious charm of novelty. The truth is only known to those who have studied in theory, and observed in practice, the effect of these things upon the mind. It often indeed happens, that the rich for the sake of recovering health or avoiding pain, confine themselves to as little variety, and live as sparingly, as the poorest peasant; and this, after having been bred to different habits, and without the same incentives to appetite. Yet how little do these persons seem to lose of the enjoyment of life! and how little should we sympathize with their lamentations over a vegetable meal, and compulsory abstinence from wine! Here is surely a general conviction that we must look to other sources for the presence as well as the privation of happiness.

What has been here argued more particularly with respect to the sustenance of man, may be extended to all his ordinary relaxations. Habit is the equalizer of them all. The poet did not consult his own imagination, but human nature, when he complained that sleep is not to be purchased by the canopies of state, or sounds

of sweetest melody. The ship-boy's hammock, the peasant's hut, the mechanic's truckle-bed, disgusting as different habits render them to the rich and luxurious, receive their owners as comfortably, and send them forth as much refreshed, as the best furnished apartment and the softest down.

It is not, therefore, so just a subject of complaint as it has been often thought, and may at first appear to be, that, in the most civilized state of Europe, " vast numbers of their inhabitants are deprived of almost every accommodation, that can render life tolerable or secure."* It is not a subject of complaint, if these accommodations contribute no more than experience shows they do contribute to the happiness of the habitual possessor. The power of habit mitigates such privations: and such privations only are the peculiar evil of poverty. Pain presses upon the poor man only in common with his richer superiors, or rather

* Pol. Just. p. xv. vol. i.

it might be said, if it were not unnecessary to push the argument too far, that pain presses upon him less severely, from the hardness of his frame, and his exemption from the scourges of luxury.

II. Is it, then, to be concluded, that happiness is altogether imaginary, or uniformly equal? By no means: but the essentials of it have not been hitherto brought into view. They do not consist of the gifts of fortune. By the common principles of our nature, one of the first of these is occupation. Provided only that it be tolerably agreeable to the physical or mental powers, occupation is happiness. Nothing, indeed, is more usually heard than complaints of the fatigue of labour, and wearisomeness of business; but if a comparison could be instituted between the satisfaction of a man who rises with a certain portion of business to be performed, and of him who looks forward to no definite and fixed employment of the day, it would be clearly understood how favourable to happiness is a regular occupation.

Nor is this assertion inconsistent with that love of ease and relaxation, which is the great incentive to industry. Relaxation is certainly advantageous, and probably even necessary, to the bodily and mental powers. Every age has found it so: the ancients sought it in their games and spectacles: the warlike exertions of savages are followed by feasts and carousals: the man of business and the man of literature alike indulge in their season of rest; the peasant and the artisan relax on the sabbath, and at the season of their occasional festivals. But relaxation is not enjoyed by the habitually idle. Ease is their labour, want of occupation their fatigue; a fatigue far more oppressive, and less susceptible of alleviation, than any which the necessities of the poor can impose upon them.*

So Cotta, in Cic. de Nat. Deor. argues against Epicurus, "*Nihil cessatione melius existimantem. At ipsi tamen pueri, etiam cum cessent, exercitatione aliquâ ludicrâ delectantur.*" And Plutarch, on the same ground: *Ψεῦδὸς ἔστι, τὸ ἐνθυμεῖν τοὺς μὴ πολλὰ πράσσοντας.* Contr. Epic. A remarkable confirmation of this may be drawn from the early life of the Italian poet, Alfieri, whose account of the misery he experi-

The truth of this and of the preceding observations is evident from the various inventions by which the ingenuity of man contrives to divert the hours of idleness, and to find a point for the mind to fix upon. The chief allurements to gaming seems to be the hold it takes on the attention; and the persons most addicted to it are undeniably those who seek a refuge from ennui, and an employment of vacant time.* The more rational amusement of field sports affords a mixed satisfaction, arising, in part, from the animating glow of health which is produced by active exercise and air; but receiving its completion from the energy with which the mind is inspired, intent upon the pursuit of its object. If bodily labour were, in

enced from listlessness would be incredible if it did not proceed from himself.

* Robertson, *Amer.* ii. 213. "These same causes which so often prompt persons in civilized life, who are at their ease, to have recourse to this pastime, render it the delight of the savage. The former are independent of labour, the latter do not feel the necessity of it; and as both are unemployed, they run with transport to whatever is interesting enough to stir and to agitate their minds." See to the same purpose, Paley, *Mor. Phil.* vol. i. p. 32.

itself, an evil, or a pain without compensation, it would not be thus voluntarily undertaken.

We hear, however, frequent complaints of the severity and constant recurrence of manual exertion. But the irksome routine of sedentary business, from which a very small portion of mankind is exempted, calls forth complaints as loud, and probably as reasonable. That both are founded on a miscalculation of the nature of happiness, appears from the disappointment which commonly accompanies a change of life : a circumstance to which most persons look forward, when pressed with temporary burdens : but which is never attended with the expected satisfaction, unless the activity of the mind finds new resources for itself, in occupations no less busy and constant than it had pursued before.

The poorer ranks of society, therefore, are not deprived of happiness because they are condemned to labour, unless that labour is oppressive to their bodily strength and faculties.

That this is not the case may be ascertained, not only from what we know of human strength, and its gradual adaptation to the burden imposed upon it, but from what we see of the recreations of the poor, which are, in favourable seasons and climates, invariably athletic and active. In those countries of Europe which enjoy a dry atmosphere and mild temperature, the peasant's evening is regularly concluded with dancing. The exercises are all athletic with which the labouring poor of our own country divert the close of the day, and relax from its serious fatigues.

To these general views of the effect of labour upon happiness, manufactures, at first sight, appear to afford a solitary exception. The mechanical exercise of the manufacturer bears no comparison with the manual labour of the peasant, whose horizon is expanded, and whose employments are various; while the manufacturer breathes an air which custom may render tolerable, but nothing can render salutary; and his gregarious mode of living is too

often productive of dissoluteness and vice. We find, however, by experience, that the extension of manufacturing industry is not *necessarily* followed by injury, either to the mind or the bodily frame. Care and attention on the part of the employer, in well-regulated concerns, diffuse the comforts of improved manufactures, without the drawback of individual distress.*

* There are manufactories which, by the care and judgment of their superintendents, have become even schools of moral discipline: nor is there any existing reason why they should not commonly exhibit such an appearance, if the excellent practice of which the success has been experimentally proved were general. As to the unhealthiness of manufactories, Dr. Jarrold's observations are of importance, because they are the result of local experience. He speaks of the cotton-works in the neighbourhood of Stockport. "As children are admitted to work at the age of eight or ten years, it might be expected that the injurious influence of their occupation would, at that tender age, be most apparent; on this account I have attended much to them, and I do not scruple to declare, that children so employed are as healthy as those of the poor brought up in great towns usually are, and more so than such as are apprenticed to tailors, shoemakers, or basket-makers: it is true, their countenances are pale and delicate; so are all children kept within doors: their clothes, covered with cotton, give them a forlorn ap-

Happily, too, in proportion as the division of labour has narrowed the circle of the mind's activity, it has diminished the necessity of labourers in crowded rooms by the introduction of machinery.

It must by no means be supposed, though it is frequently affirmed, that the walls which confine the manufacturer, are the limits to the expansion of his mind, which runs the same dull round to which his hands are habituated. Let it be considered, how few are the avocations of life, either among the educated or illiterate classes, in which the mere prosecution of their daily employments furnishes any material improvement to the intellect. This is left to the hours of recreation or leisure. In

pearance, but their health is not injured by their work. What has been said of children applies with equal force to adults." *Dissertations on Man*, p. 60. It has been even asserted, that out of near 3000 children employed in the mills at Lanark, then in the occupation of Mr. Dale, "during a period of twelve years, from 1785 to 1797, only fourteen died, and not one became the object of judicial punishment." "*Society for the Poor Reports*," vol. ii.

point of fact, the manufacturer derives a superiority over the peasant, from his constant intercourse with society, and the collision of various minds to which he has been accustomed from his youth. And as for the mechanic, whose labour does not confine him to a single spot, whose work demands the frequent resources of his ingenuity, and who is constantly interested in the pursuit of some new employment or operation, none of the evils of manufactures must be considered as applying to him; his active mind might be an object of envy to many who profit by, and reward his toil; and is often found of a superior rate, as to quickness of talent and reasoning powers.

III. Next in importance, as a constituent of happiness, is health. It is, perhaps, less essential than occupation; because we may often observe much tranquillity exist in a very uncertain state of health, but never without an engagement of the mind. Health, however, is not only requisite to the proper enjoyment of circumstances the most favourable to happiness,

but it gives enjoyment to circumstances the most common, or the least promising. It was justly remarked by a profound observer of human nature, that "little can be added to the happiness of a man who is in health, out of debt, and has a clear conscience: yet this," he continues, "is the state of the greater part of mankind."* There is, in fact, a pleasure attached to the mere feeling of existence, when enlivened by the activity, and nerved by the vigour of health.

Whatever be the value of these feelings, which, indeed, less than any other, derive their importance from custom or comparison; they are at least in an equal proportion dispensed to the labouring part of the community. The diseases of the poor are few and simple, compared with those of the rich and luxurious. Indeed, so favourable are regular hours, and meals, and exercise, to health, that their good effect counteracts the tendency of the most un-

* Smith, *Theory of Mor. Sent.* vol. i.

wholesome avocations. You may converse with persons who have passed their lives from an early age, among founderies and forges, whose health has been never interrupted by the furnaces and sudden transitions to which they have been so long exposed, which have had no other effect than to harden their features and encrust their limbs.* It is common, also, to find persons who, even in our variable and humid climate, have lived in the open air, and encamped from place to place under tents; and to learn that their mode of life has not only been favourable to generation, as Smith observes of poverty in general,† but even to the rearing large families of healthy children.

* “In the Mexican mines, from five to six thousand persons are employed in the amalgamation of the minerals, or the preparatory labour. A great number of these individuals pass their lives in walking barefooted over heaps of brazed metals, moistened and mixed with muriate of soda, sulphate of iron, and oxid of mercury, by the contact of the atmospheric air and the solar rays. It is a remarkable phenomenon to *see these men enjoy the most perfect health.*” Humb. i. 127.

† Wealth of Nations, vol. i.

This must be ascribed to the facility with which the human constitution adapts itself to the habits and circumstances under which it is placed ; a facility which we must suppose designed, because it peculiarly belongs to that one of created beings, to whose welfare such a property is requisite. Even those climates which prove fatal to adult strangers, are seldom unsalutary to native constitutions, or to children transplanted into them at an early age. The climate of Norway, and the rude cabin of a Norway peasant, would not readily be conceived favourable to health or longevity. Yet the average duration of life is considerably longer in that country than in any of the more civilized and genial parts of Europe ;* and affords a sufficient proof, that those conveniences are little necessary to health, of which the poor of all countries are in a great measure

* The same observation may be extended to Iceland. " A comparison of facts would probably prove, that the longevity of the Icelanders rather exceeds than falls short of the average obtained from the continental nations of Europe." Sir G. Mackenzie, p. 416.

deprived. A change from the comforts and luxurious indulgences possessed by the rich, would probably be accompanied with disease, and certainly with wretchedness. The consciousness of this has made it appear, that the situations which want those comforts, are positively, not relatively, evil. But “when Providence divided the earth among a few lordly masters, it neither forgot nor abandoned those who seemed to have been left out in the partition. In what constitutes the real happiness of human life, these last are in no respect inferior to those who would seem so much above them. In ease of body and peace of mind, the different ranks of life are nearly upon a level.”*

* Smith's *Mor. Sent.* p. 4, l. 1. We are assured by Humboldt, that “the mortality among the *miners* of Mexico is not much greater than what is observed among the other classes. We may be easily convinced of this by examining the bills of mortality in the different parishes.” Vol. i. 124.

“Avant que le Christianisme eut aboli en Europe la servitude civile, on regardoit les travaux des mines comme si pénibles, qu'on croyoit qu'ils ne pouvoient être faits que par des esclaves ou par des criminels. Mais on sçait qu'au-

It appears from the preceding remarks, that for those evils to which the division of ranks, and tendency to increase among mankind, expose the inferior classes of society, *a mitigation is provided by the nature of happiness itself*, which is more independent of those advantages to which they are strangers, than might be imagined upon a cursory observation. It is independent of luxurious superfluities, because those superfluities which luxury renders habitual, habit renders unimportant. It is not diminished by laborious occupation, because occupation is one of the necessary ingredients to happiness, which every one either invents for himself, or regrets the want of: and it is only from the turn of mind acquired by education or custom, that one occupation differs materially from another. Health, too, which in itself affords a certain portion of enjoyment, and is indispensably necessary to the enjoyment of any situation, is bestowed in at least an equal degree upon the rich and poor.

jourd' hui les hommes qui y sont employés, vivent heureux." Montesquieu, l. 15, 68.

It is, therefore, an additional testimony to the goodness of the Deity, that where the scheme which his wisdom devised for the furtherance of his plans in exercising and improving the faculties of mankind, might interfere with individual happiness, he has contrived such mitigations of the inconvenience, as not only to diminish its force, but almost to render its existence questionable.

CHAPTER V.

*On the Capabilities of Improvement in the State
of advanced Civilization.*

IT may be plausibly argued, that speculations on the nature of happiness, however satisfactory in the closet, are often decisively contradicted by the realities of life; and that the appearance of our own society, which meets every eye, is a standing argument against my conclusions. It furnishes us with an example of great public prosperity; of all the mechanical improvements and refinements of art, which the combination of skill and capital, and an industrious population, can produce: yet what is the result? Indigence and pauperism; and in the very heart of opulence, and industry, and intelligence, considerably more than a

tenth part of the population relieved by public charity.*

It is very soothing to our indolence and self-satisfaction, to charge upon the constitution of the world, that is, upon the ordinances of the Deity, the various evils of poverty and ignorance which confront us on every side. But it

* I have stated the fact much as it appears on the face of the returns. But it is liable to great misapprehension with those who do not remember, that by the system of poor laws, inadequate wages are made up to labourers with large families by the parish; they derive, therefore, no more than a fourth, fifth, or sixth part of their support from this source: and that in most cases only in severe seasons, dear years, or during temporary loss of work. This circumstance requires the more observation, because it appears on the face of one of Mr. Colquhoun's abstracts, that among the *unproductive labourers* in Great Britain and Ireland, whose exertions do not create any new property, are to be classed 1,548,400 paupers. Now, a large proportion of those here denominated paupers and unproductive, are in fact the most hard-working members of the community. Those relieved in work-houses may be reckoned really as unproductive, and amounted, in 1803, to 83,462. Mr. Colquhoun himself, in a subsequent calculation, considers the paupers as gaining two fifths of their support. Compare pages 109 and 154.

would be more reasonable as well as more decorous, to inquire in the first place, how far such evils arise necessarily from the law of nature, and how far, on the other hand, they admit of easy mitigation, and only need that care and attention which the Christian religion enjoins every man to bestow upon his neighbour. When a South American Indian is seized with an infectious disorder, he is shut up in a solitary hovel, and abandoned to his fate. In our improved state of society, the sufferer under a similar calamity experiences the benefit of skill and care, and is probably recovered. But we must not be Europeans in our treatment of bodily maladies, and treat the minds and morals of our fellow creatures with barbarian indifference. The Author of our existence, when he did not exempt us from the civil or physical disorders of an imperfect state, ordained also that each should have their alleviations; without which mankind would live miserably or perish prematurely. Those alleviations, indeed, are not definitely pointed out or prescribed. Neither was it possible they

should be ; inasmuch as they depend on circumstances varying at every point of civilization, varying in every climate and country, and even in the same country according to its progress towards opulence. The human race, whose faculties are infinitely improved by a state of advanced civilization, is bound to employ them in discovering and applying the remedies of those evils which peculiarly belong to each condition of society. It is a part of the system by which the Deity acts universally, to render man a free and spontaneous, but not a necessary instrument of his own welfare.

—Pater ipse colendi

Haud facilem esse viam voluit, primusque per artem

Movit agros, curis acuens mortalia corda :

Nec torgere gravi passus sua regna veterno.

This is as true of the moral as of the natural world. Neither soil can dispense with cultivation, although both are so constituted as to be capable of excellent produce. Let that only be undertaken, which in our advanced stage of civilization is within the reach of practicable accomplishment, and the general state of so-

ciety, like the country it cultivates, would on every side be full of "beauty to the eye and music to the ear."

I. The fundamental cause of the greatest evils of the poor is ignorance. Ignorance, however, is not only the mere incapacity to write or read; experience often teaches us, that these acquirements, however desirable, are by no means indispensable; and that though they are wanting, there may be much intellect, a quick sense of the ways and means of individual advantage, and an accurate knowledge of moral good and evil. The ignorance arising from the want of intercourse with minds superior to their own, possessed of wider information, and having therefore different views of interest and duty; this, together with the scantiness of religious knowledge, is the ignorance which most generally and most hurtfully besets the lower classes.

It cannot be argued, that either of these sorts of ignorance is unavoidable. They were

not, even in former days; but in our own, the improvements so happily introduced into education, have brought the first rudiments of learning within reach of the poorest rank. And they have done more: for it is one of the principal advantages of the Madras system, that it sharpens the faculties and exercises the minds of those subject to it so successfully, as to render them, comparatively, different beings from the scholar of a former age. So that the drilled and practised soldier does not show a greater change from the slovenly and awkward follower of the plough, than the child thus educated from the tenant of some remote hamlet or neglected waste, which population has found out, but none of its advantages have reached.

An indefinite capability of improvement opens before us, when the human mind is thus put in motion. But, that the soil may give all its produce, the skill of the agriculturist must be superadded to the labour of the peasant. A right direction, as well as a stimulus, must be

applied to the mind, by the superintendence and occasional intercourse of the superior ranks. Where this intercourse is not wanting, to obviate any mischief which the system of competition might introduce, and counteract wrong impressions; when the good seed of religion is sown upon the soil prepared by education, to remind the growing generation that the object of the care bestowed upon them is not to raise them above their allotted condition, but to fit them for performing more adequately their duties both to God and man; then we have a prospect of general improvement, not chimerical and visionary, but approved by judgment and realized by experience.

It is now unnecessary to combat the idea, that these privileges of civilization, if granted universally, would throw down the ladder by which the eminence was reached, and paralyze the industry which is required to maintain it. Few will any longer venture to assert that ignorance makes a necessary ingredient in industry, or that stupidity is essential to subordination.

Which will be the best servant or the best subject? He who returns unwillingly, or at best mechanically, like the patient animal he drives, to his daily routine of employment; or he who has learnt in his youth, that the object of his life is the performance of appointed duties, and who, in his man's estate, keeps constantly in view his responsibility for their right performance? He who sees no farther than the necessities of his station and his daily stipend; or he whose mind "of larger discourse," more capable "to look before and after," brings a principle to his work higher than that of immediate interest, and makes his habitual employment an exercise of practical religion?

We have now reached that stage in the progress of improvement, where, with a few exceptions, the culture requisite to implant these principles and extend these views, is generally and amply provided. Elementary schools either are, or may be, universal. Children do not leave them, till they are both initiated and practised in the primary duties of religion; nor, if

all parties discharge their office, till they have been made intimately acquainted with the important purpose of their lives. In the Bible, which they may both possess and read, they have a perpetual and infallible instructor. Public and private prayer, to which they have been habituated at school, public and private instruction from their minister, which their awakened faculties enable them to comprehend, supply them with the knowledge of their duty and the power of performing it. The bounty of their Creator, and the love of their Redeemer, in placing an immortal existence within their reach, are disclosed to their view, as a solace and a guide in the troubles and difficulties of their progress through life.

Now, let any one consider how much is thus removed from the pressure of laborious poverty ; and what a step it is towards human happiness, to have an object of infinite price in continual prospect, and to feel the inward consciousness of a constant advance towards it.*

* “A man who is in earnest in his endeavours after the

If labour is heavy, or distress severe, how greatly is the load lightened by the conviction that man is not the sport of chance, or accidental circumstances, or human enactments, but the work of a wise and benevolent Creator, and the object of his paternal care! In short, what a cloud of ignorance is dispersed, what a mine of information is opened, wherever the great principles of Christianity are understood: as comprehending our duty both personal and relative, to God and to our neighbour!

But in this country, if these are not practically learnt, the imputation must not be cast upon the Deity, nor even upon the state. Excepting where population has outgrown the original establishment, and a fresh legislative provision is demanded, ignorance must originate in the omission of a positive duty, either happiness of a future state, has, in this respect, an advantage over all the world. For he has constantly before his eyes an object of supreme importance, productive of perpetual engagement and activity, and of which the pursuit (which can be said of no other) lasts to the conclusion of his life." Paley's *Mor. Phil.* i. 13.

on the part of him who neglects to teach, or of him who refuses to learn. The Bible, the power of reading it, of hearing comments on it, (I speak collectively,) are within every one's reach: and where these advantages are attainable, shall the goodness of God be impeached? He has performed his part towards man, and it is for man to see that he performs his part in return to his Creator.

Ignorance, therefore, is not the inevitable lot of the majority of our community; and with ignorance a host of evils disappear. Of all obstacles to improvement, ignorance is the most formidable, because the only true secret of assisting the poor is to make them agents in bettering their own condition, and to supply them, not with a temporary stimulus, but with a permanent energy. As fast as the standard of intelligence is raised, the poor become more and more able to co-operate in any plan proposed for their advantage, more likely to listen to any reasonable suggestion, more able to understand, and therefore more willing to pur-

sue it. Hence it follows, that when gross ignorance is once removed, and right principles are introduced, a great advantage has been already gained against squalid poverty. Many avenues to an improved condition are opened to one whose faculties are enlarged and exercised ; he sees his own interest more clearly, he pursues it more steadily, he does not study immediate gratification at the expense of bitter and late repentance, or mortgage the labour of his future life without an adequate return. Indigence, therefore, will rarely be found in company with good education.

II. In the case, however, of its unavoidable occurrence, a remedy is already provided by the state. The poor laws possess this advantage among many objections, that we are not haunted with the idea of unalleviated distresses : if nature is worn down with age or sickness, if labour yields no support, and family assistance fails, the indigent member of society has at least a shelter to which he may retire, and either take refuge from the pelting of the

storm, or be enabled to weather it by temporary assistance.

This provision, like other human institutions, contains a mixture of good and evil. Unquestionably, local charity, well directed, might supply small and particular districts much more comfortably and much less expensively than the operation of any laws; but much good sense, and leisure, and benevolence, are requisite to perform this business in an impartial manner. Many may be expected to doubt whether irremediable poverty, and the helplessness of sickness, infancy, and old age, can ever be safely left, in a large and fully peopled community, to the care of that spontaneous charity on which they must devolve in the absence of all legislative provision. In the mean time it is some satisfaction to reflect that an infant family, deserted by profligate parents, or left orphans by the visitation of God, are not abandoned as if human life was of no value; and that the disabled or decrepit labourer has a sure resource, and is not condemned to elicit

casual sustenance from door to door. But the system, though professing to remedy the evils of human nature, would be in fact more innocent if human nature were more perfect ; so that none should receive its aid except the objects really deserving such interference, nor any depend upon its support except in failure of all other resources. The injury does not fall upon the contributor to the rates, as is commonly supposed, who, if he did not pay these, would pay much more in the enhanced price of every article from the augmented wages of labour : the principal mischief is done to the moral character of the receiver, who is extravagant, in confidence of a sure support : or, if he is not positively taught improvidence, at least does not learn prudence.

The Friendly Societies, which include nearly a million of labouring members of our own community, in some measure diminish the evils resulting from the system of poor laws : and the eagerness with which they have been incorporated, is an evidence that the lower classes

are not unwilling to avail themselves of any intelligible plan for the improvement of their condition, or to fortify themselves against the uncertainties of life by forethought and frugality. But friendly societies, though good, are not the best possible provision; because they assist only old age and personal sickness; whereas a labourer, through the afflictions of his family or temporary loss of employ, may be seriously distressed without positive illness: and the evil at last requires a cure, which seasonable relief might have prevented from existing.*

* "In considering the innocent causes of indigence, it will be seen that the irremediable cases, requiring constant and permanent support, are few in number, compared with those useful labourers broken down for the moment, but who, by the judicious application of well-timed props, might be restored to society, and their industry rendered again productive." Colq. p. 112. Much has been done in this way in many large towns by associations on the principle of the "Stranger's Friend Society" in London, by assisting the poor with temporary loans or gifts; which shows the benefit that might be expected from a plan enabling them to *lend* or *give* to themselves.

The present state of our civilization has suggested a more unexceptionable plan for the melioration of the condition of the poor ; which it is the more necessary to point out, because it shows that the peculiar evils and their appropriate remedies lie near together, in every stage of society. An advanced state of public opulence does not seem at first sight the most desirable air for a poor man to breathe. Of necessity, its population is dense, and the reward of labour scanty ; and every road to preferment so choaked with rival adventurers, that he has little prospect of surpassing or even overtaking them in the race. But, on the other hand, the same circumstances of society afford opportunities, which no other can, of deriving the greatest possible advantage from every farthing which labour can obtain. The demand for capital, occasioned by universal industry, the ease of communication, the general intelligence to foresee, and public credit to ensure every profitable opportunity, are a set-off, if a proper use were made of them, against the evils of low wages and contending labourers. An American peasant

with four shillings a day is not richer, if comfort is riches, than an English peasant with two, and has little other superiority than the questionable one of being more independent of his employer.

The security of capital in this country, the ease with which it is turned to the best use, the quick and ready communication of labour and the produce of labour throughout the whole kingdom, afford inestimable facilities to what ought to be the first consideration of public and private men, the improvement of the state of the mass of the community. I do not mean to insinuate that this subject has been neglected in Great Britain. The eminence which our country has reached by her charities is no less remarkable than that to which she has been raised by the superiority of her arms and opulence. But something still remains to be done. The poor man requires to be taught prudence, by seeing its advantage clearly before him. There are few situations in which the labouring classes might

not save, in the season of their strength, a provision for the season of infirmity: but as things are, there are still fewer, where they can place out their savings at all, or, if at all, with security.* A great commercial establishment cannot stop its machinery to receive weekly shillings from a hundred or a thousand individuals. If it could, or would, the melancholy instability of country banks, often built upon no other foundation than the credulity of the neighbourhood, is a powerful objection to their becoming, without an especial guarantee, the depositaries of petty savings. No bankruptcy among these establishments takes place, which does not heap ruin on the heads of hundreds of the most deserving members of the community: those who by laborious industry and long self-denial have laid up their twenty, or fifty, or hundred pounds, as a support to a future family or their own declining years; and now find themselves by a

* I have allowed these pages to stand as they were first published; though no longer applicable to their original purpose, they may not be without interest in showing the difference effected even in a few years.

sudden blow deprived of the hard earned produce of a life of labour. Neither does the evil stop with the immediate sufferers. The bursting of a single dam inundates a widely-extended level. Is this the fruit of frugality? Why should we hoard up, that others may squander our savings? This reasoning is too obvious, not to be unanswerable in the view of youth, and irresistible when backed by inclination.

The difficulty admits of easy remedy, though it is really the greatest of which our labouring poor can complain. If some of the more intelligent inhabitants of a district, or the principal landholders of a county, would bestow their attention upon this subject, as they have with great advantage upon Insurance Societies and other general interests, they would deserve the gratitude of the age, and receive the most satisfactory applause, the improvement of public welfare. In a small district, or a single village, an individual might effect something, by vesting a certain sum in the hands of trus-

tees as a security to his poorer neighbours ; and by devoting a few hours in every week or month to receiving their small savings, he might render them most effectual service, without the least risk to himself, by allowing the 4 per cent. for their little capital. But the system, to be useful, ought to be general ; and, if general, could not be well managed without the regularity of habits of business and skill in the employment of capital. The establishment of county banks, with such security as should be satisfactory to the superintendents of the scheme, would be both desirable, and easily practicable ; and might soon be made so far advantageous as at least to defray the expenses of management, since the customer would have just reason to be satisfied, if he could obtain without risk even 4 per cent. for his money. The security of the capital is of much more consequence than the rate of interest ; and its insecurity, according to any mode already within reach of the poor of employing their savings, is one great reason why so little is at present saved.

It is a benevolent appointment of Providence, that judicious charity is twice blessed, and redounds to the advantage of the giver, sometimes not to his moral only, but temporal advantage. If a system of this kind should ever be universally established, its promoters will find the poor-rates diminished, which now oppress landed property so heavily, not only by the amount of the sum thus annually saved from dissipation, but by all the habits which the constant custom of frugality and thoughtfulness would generate ; and parish support will only be what it ought to be, the resource of irremediable misfortune, of orphan infancy or friendless age. Such a system seems alone to be wanting, in order to render this country the happiest as well as the most intelligent of the world ; it would form a natural union with the general education now diffused among the poor ; it derives an evident facility from the state of public debt ; and is peculiarly demanded by the sudden variations of prices which our present condition seems likely to entail upon us, as well as to correct the improvident habits which the existence of

a poor-law has introduced among our peasantry.

It certainly cannot be pretended that these and similar advantages of an opulent state, spring up spontaneously, like the produce of the golden age: intelligence must be exerted to descry, and philanthropy to direct them. But it might form a serious objection against the divine goodness, if it were supposed that the condition of the majority of the community must always be deteriorated, as the community itself advanced in opulence. That this highest point of civilization is still capable of such a measure of general happiness, as belongs to an imperfect and preparatory state, is all that I undertake to prove. Should any one think the universal establishment or application of such beneficial plans impracticable, it will be easy to show that the impossibility does not lie in the nature of things. There can be no harm in building an Utopia on a Christian foundation. There is positive good, when the question regards the benevolence of the Crea-

tor ; who, when he placed within the reach of man the means of general happiness, Christian doctrines, Christian precepts, and Christian intelligence, justly demands on man's part that he should stretch out his hand to obtain them.

In reducing the plan to detail, we will suppose, for convenience sake, a parish of 1000 souls ; which is larger than the average of country parishes in England, and smaller than that of towns. The principle is universal ; the practical detail admits of considerable enlargement or contraction. The first thing necessary to the general welfare, is the education of the growing population. The number within the age of education may be roughly stated at one fourth of the whole.* Of these 250, 50 may be supposed in a situation above the

* The average result of the census of 1820, showed for every 100 individuals

Under 7 years, . . .	20
Between 7 and 15, . .	20
— 15 and 20, . . .	10
Above 20, . . .	50

parochial school, for which 200 remain after that deduction. According to the Madras system, one person can effectually superintend the education of more than 100 children of all ages. One school, divided into two apartments, one master, and one mistress, will suffice to conduct the education, each having under their care 100 of their own sex. The annual expense, after the building of the school-room, will be covered by £100, or at most £125 ; being no more than *two shillings or two shillings and sixpence* a head on the whole community of 1000 individuals.

I consider the clergyman of the parish as the natural and legal superintendent of the establishment ; and his presence for two hours in the week, after the machine is once in operation, will suffice to preserve a check on the immediate directors, and to fill that department which requires superior intelligence or authority ;* and to interweave with all the in-

* I would not appear to expect of my clerical brethren more than is required of them by their ordination vow : the

formation acquired by the children, the most valuable of all information, a sense of their situation in life, and its practical duties of subordination, content, and industry.

The advantages of little savings, the importance which the smallest sums acquire by accumulation, may be not only inculcated, but practically taught, by a trifling weekly contribution, either to be employed at the end of the

religious education of the poor, and the visitation of the sick hereafter alluded to, are among their prescribed duties. I am still more certain that I do not demand from them more than is readily bestowed by the majority of our parochial clergy. They have indeed an awful and responsible situation, when it is considered how much both of the temporal and eternal interest of their flock depends upon the faithful and complete discharge of their ministerial duties. But they have their reward. Much is said of the increasing zeal of sectaries; and it may be necessary for us to keep a prudent guard against possible as well as evident dangers. But the parochial clergy are drawing round themselves, and the excellent establishment to which they belong, a rampart stronger than exclusive privileges or state protection; they are fortifying themselves in the hearts of the people, who are never insensible to what is contributed towards their best and dearest interests by the attention of a laborious and conscientious minister.

year in clothing or in Bibles, or any other desirable object.* If the child saves pence, the man will save shillings, supposing only that the same pains are taken to make him understand the advantages of so doing, and the same facilities placed in his way. In a parish of 1000 souls, it is not too much to assume that some individual may have sufficient leisure, philanthropy, and general acquaintance with business, to be the banker of his poorer neighbours; a guarantee being given that the deposits should be laid out in real or government securities. It is proved by experience in Edinburgh, that on the opening of such a concern, one hour in the week will in general be sufficient for a single person to receive and

* I have been often astonished at hearing these penny contributions objected to, as coming eventually from the parish rates. Granting the fact, which is certainly too rare to be made a sweeping assertion; suppose the family to receive their whole support, or 12s. a week from the parish; what evil can arise from the deduction of a *hundred and forty-fourth part* of that sum for any permanent object, at all equal to the advantage derived from the habit of forethought and self-denial?

pay the money, and to enter the transactions in the books: the expense is so trifling, that it would be repaid, even if the concern were on a very small scale, by the fractions of interest.*

These simple improvements do not seem to me to presuppose either a degree of understanding in the poor, or of humanity in the rich, which it is unreasonable to require. But it may be argued, look at the weekly wages of the peasant or manufacturer, look at the pittance which the density of population compels him to accept as the meed of continued exertion; and then answer, what can be reserved from immediate and daily wants for the support of future infirmity?

The nature of happiness requires thus much: the prospect of a competency in the situation to which every individual is born. I ask no

* See "A short Account of the Edinburgh Savings Bank;" or an abstract of it in the Ed. Rev. vol. xxv.

one to be satisfied with a lower rate of welfare than this: but I assert, that on a general view of the chances of life, this prospect is within the reach of every individual, even on the present average rate of wages, if he had the prudence to look forward and save, and the facility of securing his savings. As things are now, indeed, the common practice is, for the young labourer or mechanic to marry as soon as he begins to work for himself, without a farthing beforehand, with weekly employment perhaps for the summer, but no certainty of the same constant occupation in winter, with wages only sufficient for a very small family, and consequently without resource in case of illness or occasional difficulty, except in casual charity or parish pay. The immediate feeling on his mind is, that his wages will support a wife as well as himself; and if he had not that demand upon them, they would all disappear before the end of the week: he has neither the idea nor the means of saving any portion of them. But since he claims the advantage peculiar to an infant society, early marriage,

while he is living in fact in an old and fully peopled community, the consequence is, severe poverty for the rest of his life.

It cannot be said, however, that this improvidence is a necessary evil, therefore its consequences are not necessary. Supposing the prudential system only so far established, that the average period of marriage should be twenty-five, it might be easily within the power of the lowest classes to secure a provisional support for their family more independent than the parish allowance, and more regular than the operation of private charity.

The wages of husbandry, including the additions of harvest-time, may be averaged at 12s. per week, from the age of eighteen. Half that sum is amply sufficient for the support of a single man. This would leave an overplus of 6s. per week for seven years: but, to avoid any appearance of overstating the fact, and to allow for lost time, we will only take 4s. or £10 per ann. which if regularly laid up, would,

with interest, make £80 by the age of twenty-five. Allow the mechanic to work for himself at twenty-one, his higher rate of wages will enable him to save 10s. weekly, or £21 per-ann. The careful application of this surplus will also make him worth the same sum at twenty-five.*

Allow this to be the period of marriage, which is much earlier than the average period of those who are brought up to the learned professions. It is probable, that by similar habits the wife may contribute such a share of capital as will supply the cottage with its humble furniture. At all events, they live without difficulty, even if without farther saving, for four or five years; the interest of former savings paying the rent, and thus re-

* The exertions which the lower classes make, when they see the benefit clearly before them, would surprise the mere calculator of the money which passes through their hands. See Mr. Whitbread's speech on the Poor Laws, and the case of Joseph Austin (Reports on the Poor, vol. iii.), with many others which occur in that collection.

moving the necessity of those extraordinary exertions, which in the way of taskwork sometimes undermine the constitutions of the industrious poor. If the family increase after this time, difficulties will increase. This is the period of a labourer's life which it is hardest to encounter, from his thirtieth to his fortieth year: it is the inclement season, which he ought to expect and to which he should look forward. Before that period, he has only occasion to be frugal: after it, his children will begin to support themselves: but at present, an infant family will prevent the wife from contributing much towards the weekly outgoings: and the children themselves can gain nothing towards them. Former savings, therefore, the harvest of the productive season, must now be drawn upon: but they were laid up for this very purpose, and we can afford it. Let 5*s.* a week be taken from the four dead months of the year; those who are conversant with the labourer's cottage, will know that 5*s.* in addition to his usual wages will place him in comparative opulence; and suppose this draft to

be continued during ten years, the capital has only lost £40. From that time the children contribute their share; the family ceases to be a growing burden; and there remains a stock towards setting forward the children in life, or to supply some of the numerous wants of increasing years.

Were these habits general, how little comparative distress would the appearance of society exhibit! Marriage, by being a short time delayed, would be more prudent and happier; population would more equally adapt itself to the demand for labour; labour, therefore, would be paid in more exact proportion to the real value of money; fewer would be necessarily idle; and that great embitterer of domestic life, irremediable poverty, or indigence, would be seldom known. Only those distresses would meet our view, which are the common lot of all ranks and conditions; and there are many, no doubt, which neither prudence can prevent nor fortune cure. Neither education nor frugality can make our earthly state again a paradise: the angel still guards

the frontiers of Eden, and shuts its entrance against the descendants of the first transgressors. But the *unavoidable* evils of life have been already considered : and how much mitigation they admit in a civilized state, may be not only demonstrated, but seen and felt : indeed, in our country, much more attention has been paid to the means of alleviation than of prevention.

The silent and unseen griefs of penury and desertion belong almost exclusively to large and crowded cities.* In a parish of the size we have contemplated, the minister will be well acquainted with the situation of all its inhabitants, either by personal inspection, or by means of a committee of his active neigh-

* If societies like those established at Bath, Bristol, Oxford, and elsewhere, for inquiring into the case of all travellers, vagrants, paupers, and beggars, and relieving real distress, were general in large towns, they would alleviate much misery, and restrain much vice, by rendering mendicity an unprofitable trade. At present the good is partial ; and the stream is only diverted into another channel, wherever its usual course is stopped.

bours, who can afford a portion of their time to this most useful species of charity. In proportion as the size of the parish increases, the chance will increase of finding such assistance; and committees thus associated will be able to relieve the severest sufferings of indigence even in those populous manufacturing towns which certainly were not foreseen, when the division of our country into parishes took place.

Shall I be asked, whether I look forward in earnest to any such melioration of society, or that it should generally present this aspect to the observer? I can only answer, that there is nothing in the nature of things to make it impossible; there is wealth enough, and intelligence enough; the difficulty arises not from the inability, but the unwillingness of mankind. We have no right to reject an obvious remedy, and then complain that the disease is incurable. Let every one in his station do his duty, and there will be little room for murmuring against the condition of the human race. This is all, I repeat, with which the

vindicator of the divine goodness is concerned : the right performance of these duties is the trial of man's virtue ; and if they are faithfully performed, public welfare is his immediate reward.* There are at this moment many districts which furnish examples of the practicability of such improvement ; where a large majority of the population display in their conduct the excellence of the religion they profess ; where the rising generation is so educated as to be useful in their respective stations ; where regular contributions provide Bibles and clothing, and other articles of use and comfort ; where the elder members of the society are

* The late Mr. Whitbread, in a speech which will confer lasting honour upon his memory, gave a public declaration of what might be effected even by the means at present in operation : " I have had the good fortune, with the assistance of able hands, to produce, by the operation of the poor laws alone, in the parish where I reside, a situation of things than which none can be presented more agreeable ; where there is not one wretched being, nor one well-founded cause of complaint ; and where the workhouse exhibits regularity, industry, economy, cleanliness, and health, testified by the countenances of all who inhabit it."

associated for the purpose of visiting the sick, instructing the ignorant, comforting the afflicted, and reporting cases of distress.* If there are any such parishes now, there is no reason why there should not be more; nay, there is no necessary obstacle to their becoming universal. The prevalence of religious knowledge, education, and frugality, does not defeat its own object, or tend, like indeterminate or indiscreet charities, to encourage a redundant population.†

* See Reports of the Society for bettering the Condition of the Poor, *passim*. Among these every charitable person may find useful hints to direct his own benevolence. It has now, perhaps, become desirable to republish in a single volume, a collection of those plans which have *best stood the test of experience*.

† Upon the whole, there is satisfaction in reflecting, that more has been done towards permanently bettering the condition of the lower classes, within the last twenty years, than in the whole preceding century; and Mr. Whitbread's pleasing anticipation is not altogether visionary: "In the adoption of the system of education, I foresee an enlightened peasantry, frugal, industrious, sober, orderly, and contented, because they are acquainted with the true value of frugality, sobriety, industry, and order; crimes diminishing, because the enlightened understanding abhors crime; the practice

There are mistakes on this head, which demand correction. It has been urged, that our improved knowledge on the subject of population is unfavourable to charity; and even inconsistent with Christianity which enjoins it. This may be an easy shelter to the selfish and extravagant, who lull their consciences with the belief, that, in spending sumptuously instead of giving prudently, they are practising political economy. But the most rigorous precept of Scripture might be followed in the most literal exactness, without any danger of injuring the community or any violation of general rules: "Turn not your face from any poor man;" but inquire into the circumstances of his distress, and point out to

of Christianity prevailing, because the mass of your population can read, comprehend and feel its divine origin, and the beauty of the doctrines which it inculcates; your kingdom safe from the insult of the enemy, because every man knows the worth of that which he is called upon to defend. In the provision for the security of the savings of the poor, I see encouragement to frugality, security to property, and the large mass of the people connected with the state, and indissolubly bound to its preservation." *Speech, &c.* p. 95.

him the mode in which the prudent regulations of society have directed that it should be relieved. The subdivision of labour, which is peculiar to a large and intelligent community is applicable to charity, as well as to literature and the arts, and renders it very possible to bestow attention on the wants and distresses of every individual.*

There is something in this mutual dependence and connexion of the different members of society on one another, which is both pleasing in contemplation, and eminently suited to the situation of mankind as the children of one common parent, and the heirs of one common immortality. A state of civilization, which supposes opulence, competency, and poverty, in all their various degrees, is far more suitable, when thus improved, to the purposes of man's being, than any condition of uniform equality could become, even if we depart from experience

* This may be seen reduced to practice in the operations of the Bath, Oxford, or Bristol Mendicant Societies.

in framing it, and indulge the imagination with an ideal picture. That there should be room for the exercise of benevolence, a disposition of the mind, which, in fact, contains within itself many virtues, was undoubtedly in the contemplation of the Creator. The contrast of condition which arises from the unequal distribution of wealth, is well fitted to excite this; and a crowd of Christian graces follow in its train: the humility which visits the cottager, encourages his industry or cheers his distress; the denial of selfish gratification, for the purpose of raising laborious poverty; the prudence which withholds relief from the clamorous, to give it, though at the expense of time and trouble, to unobtrusive merit; the reciprocal emotions of gratitude and goodwill; and “all the charities” of neighbour, friend, and patron, have their origin in the just exercise of benevolence. When man is in a more perfect state, he will stand in no need of these opportunities, which are, in effect, trials: but no *preparatory* dispensation could be more consistent with the

divine goodness, than that which makes the general well-being of the members of society depend upon their right performance of their respective duties.

CHAPTER VI.

On the Evils of an uncivilized State.

THE circumstances of those countries which have either never reached a state of tolerable civilization, or having reached it, have fallen back to the different degrees of rudeness in which we find them now, remain still to be examined. But first, it is right to observe, that the nature of these evils is widely different from the case of partial poverty, arising from the inequality of ranks. That has appeared to be, in a great measure, the certain result of general improvement. On the other hand, the evils of barbarous countries are the offspring of no such necessity, but of moral degradation: they militate against the apparent design of Providence, since it has been largely shown

that the natural instincts and reason of mankind tend to their union, improvement, and civilization. In as far, therefore, as they originate in a departure from those principles of reason of which the Deity has left no man naturally destitute, they are not chargeable upon God, but upon man.

But it will be argued, that these wide and extensive deviations from the divine plan must have come within the prescience of the Deity; and it would have been more consonant with the character of his goodness to have prevented them by the original constitution of things. Here it is just and reasonable to answer, that such an objection, in order to be valid, ought to proceed upon a knowledge far more complete than we possess, either from conjecture or revelation, of the extent and nature of the divine counsels; and in particular with respect to the prescribed duration of the world, and the continuance of this inferior and preparatory state. A chain of mountains, of which the height is immense, when seen within the con-

lined horizon which our visual powers can embrace, makes but a trifling inequality upon the surface of the whole globe. So the evils of barbarism, which seem a formidable aggregate when brought together, and drawn up in array against the divine goodness, would probably appear of trivial weight and force, when viewed as part of the comprehensive scheme of Providence; and especially if the number actually suffering under them could be ascertained, and the sum of evil divided by the series of ages to which it belongs.

By the principle which regulates population, civilization, throughout the universe, is constantly tending to an equilibrium. But the radiation both takes place slowly, having a vast space and a dense medium to pass through; and is subject to a diminution of force from the obstacles by which it is opposed; such as barren soils, and the climate of extreme latitudes: difficulties inherent in the nature of the system, and only to have been prevented by a constitution altogether unlike ours. Under

these circumstances it was to be expected, that, notwithstanding the tendency to universal refinement, refinement would never be universal, though it might be much more equally diffused than at present, but would always exhibit an appearance like that we see, of very different stages and degrees. This is a part of the moral and natural evil confessedly existing in the world. The question with which we are now concerned is, how far the evils inseparably attendant upon rude states of society can detract from the evidence derived from other sources, and attesting the divine benevolence? And to this question a satisfactory reply will be given, if it can be shown, both that the number of the individual tribes bears no proportion to the whole, and that there are considerable mitigations of the actual discomfort of that inferior state ; or also, lastly, that there is a tendency in the laws which regulate the world to diminish the number, and meliorate the condition, of the less improved communities.

I. The people whose unsettled mode of life and rude government, and general want of intellectual culture, include them in the present inquiry, are the native Indians of North and South America, the inhabitants of some part of Africa, of Australasia and Polynesia, and the numerous tribes which extend along the north of Asia, from the Euxine to the North Pacific Ocean.* Now, in the first place, it is a material remark, that we must not estimate the number of persons living in a barbarous state by the surface over which they are spread. It is the nature of that very barbarism to lessen the number of those who suffer under it, in exact proportion to its degree. The hunting state is more rude than the pastoral; and it furnishes

* I would be understood to speak generally, as taking a general line of argument. No doubt, tribes might be found in Europe and Asia, existing on the confines, and far from the seat, of regular government, which might strictly be added to this number: especially in parts of Persia, Turkey, and Arabia. But it would be tedious to specify each particular variety of rudeness; and the arguments, if just, are of universal application.

support to a smaller comparative population. The pastoral state, again, is far less conducive to civilization than the agricultural ; and from its very nature, a comparatively small number of inhabitants is spread over a vast extent of ground.

The hunting tribes in North America are so few and so widely scattered, that they cannot properly be said to occupy the country of which they are natives. Now and then a traveller, after penetrating for many days a vast extent of forest, encounters an Indian tent, containing a single family of five or six individuals. In the journey of discovery undertaken by order of the American government, under Captains Lewis and Clarke, during the whole course of a route extending from the east to the western coast, from the mouth of the Missouri to that of the Columbia, the largest native tribe with which the party met consisted of five hundred souls, though traversing countries till then undisturbed, and probably never before trodden by the foot of civilized man. The

Esquimaux, unattached to any particular spot, wander over an immense tract of inhospitable wilds, though their numbers, if collected, scarcely people two or three villages.* The hunters of the southern regions are not more numerous. Forster, who is by no means inclined to reduce the numbers which he estimates, reckons the Pesserais, who inhabit Terra del Fuego, the lowest of mankind: but “though their country is little inferior in size to one moiety of Ireland, hardly two thousand inhabitants are found in this great extent of lands.”† The Kamchadals, Koriaks, Ostiaks, and other tribes spread along the vast shore of the Arctic Ocean, depend for subsistence almost entirely upon fish, of which the sea and rivers furnish a plentiful supply during the summer, and the redundance of that season is dried and laid up for a winter store. Here the degree of population falls so low, that the Russian government of Irkutsk has only three persons on every square geographical mile.‡

* Heriot's Canada, 21.

† Observations, p. 317.

‡ Tooke's Russia, i. 525.

Perhaps it may be safely stated, that the people who derive their subsistence from the chase alone throughout the globe, do not exceed, do not even equal, the number of the inhabitants of Scotland. Necessity presses them within these scanty limits. The uncertainty of the supply, whether of fish or of the wild animals of the forest; the difficulty of obtaining, the impossibility of increasing it; together with the waste attending their expeditions; all forbid their multiplication, as strongly as they prevent their civilization, and confine to a very small portion, perhaps to a four or five hundredth part of the whole, the evils belonging to that lowest state of the human race, which is necessarily consequent upon the general law of increase. It might be added, also, as concurring in the same effect, that the rigours of extreme latitudes, and the hardships of savage life, have been observed by numerous travellers,* either to restrain the attention from the

* Forster, of the Esquimaux, Greenlanders, New Zealanders, and Pesserais, 315; Bruce, of the Shangalla nations; La Vaillant, of the Hottentots.

sexual passion, or to diminish the prolific power.

II. Very far removed from these, but still in a state which admits of only a low degree of improvement, compared with a settled mode of living and regular government, are the pastoral nations of northern Asia; the Calmuk, the Mongol, and Mandshur tribes, and the numerous smaller branches which, among various shades of difference, agree in the generic character of refusing agriculture, and despising a stationary abode. What has been stated of the hunting nations, is in a great measure also applicable to these; their occupation, and the nature of their subsistence, though it does not render less strong the principle of population, which keeps their number fully up to the level of their support, yet reduces that level so low, that the population is not only thinly scattered, but in its total number very inconsiderable. Gibbon has observed, that the inhabitants of the vast peninsula of Arabia might be outnumbered by the subjects of a fertile and industri-

ous province. And the whole of the inhabitants of Asiatic Russia, comprehending the principal of the Nomadic nations, whose number, by the inquiries and registers of the Empress Catherine, was ascertained with tolerable exactness, does not exceed five millions; * so that a population amounting to little more than one fourth of that of the British isles, is spread along a hundred and seventy degrees of longitude.

The laws which regulate this low population are permanent. No art or labour on the part of a pastoral nation can increase their cattle faster than a certain ratio, or to a number beyond what can be supported by their average pasture. The ratio of increase is steadily fixed by nature. The pasture is limited by the extent of land over which the tribe can range; by the degree of security with which they can lay up a winter provision, or, lastly, by the nature of the climate, and the proportion of

* See Pinkerton, ii. 48, with his authorities.

winter provision it requires. The accounts of pastoral people exemplify to us all these several circumstances. Some wander from district to district, till they are checked in their migrations by the incursions or vicinity of more powerful neighbours: with others, a great part of the summer labour consists in stacking forage for a severer season: while others again expose their cattle to the inclemency of the winter, and trust to their finding a scanty provision among the leaves and brushwood.* These difficulties and hardships, added to the epidemic diseases which occasionally appear among the cattle, and are the most formidable evils to pastoral nations, reduce the average increase of the herds and flocks so low as to make it impossible for a large population to find subsistence.

III. But in agriculture the case is widely different. The increase of corn varies, according to the climate and the culture, from ten to

* See the account of the Cheriziens, a rich tribe of the Burattes, in the *Découvertes Russes*, liv. vi. 109.

sixty, or even a hundred fold. To the increase of population, therefore, that may be supported by agriculture, there would appear to be no limit except the extent of ground: and as long as land remained to be brought into cultivation, it would seem impossible for men to increase in so great a proportion as their subsistence. It might accordingly at first be imagined, that if a people could only be induced to change their pastoral for agricultural habits, a very rude and a very large population might exist together. Against this, however, there is a barrier which cannot be overstepped. We may suppose the land to be so fertile, as to return, with very moderate cultivation, more subsistence than the family of the cultivator requires. But the cultivator will not give away his superfluity.* He will either indulge

* A striking illustration of this case may be found in the fertile island of Java. Rice is the principal food of the inhabitants, of which a labourer can earn in ordinary circumstances from four to five *kâtis* a day; and a *kâti* being equivalent to one pound and a quarter avoirdupois, is reckoned a sufficient allowance for an adult in those regions. The consequence is, that the soil of seven eighths of the island is

his indolence, and relax his exertions till the supply only equals his annual wants; or he will turn his own attention to other pursuits, and employ the hands which require subsistence in labour—at which point the distinction of ranks and all its concomitant advantages begin—or he will stimulate the invention of the hungry claimant of his superfluous produce, to make him a compensation by some useful manufacture. In either of the latter cases we see the first germ of improvement: and in those few countries where there is a smaller actual population than the climate and soil could support with ease, it should be the grand object of more civilized nations to take advantage of the favourable moment, not by multiplying labourers, which will multiply of their own

either entirely neglected or badly cultivated, and the whole of the nation is supported by the produce of the remaining eighth. “When nature does much for a country, its inhabitants are sometimes contented to do little, and, satisfied with its common gifts, neglect to improve them into the means of dignity or comfort. The peasantry of Java, easily procuring the necessities of life, seldom aim at improvement of their condition.” *Raffles’ Java*, vol. i. p. 109.

accord, at least as soon as they can be fed; but by assisting the struggles of nature to emancipate herself from a low and servile condition, and furnishing stimulants to the first weak efforts of industry. Unless this assistance is given, or industry is by some means or other encouraged, there may exist one generation of these redundant labourers, but there will be no more; they will neither have inducement nor ability to marry, and propagate a race for which there is no demand. It has been remarked by various travellers, that they have no where witnessed more distress and poverty, than where provisions were so cheap that a plentiful subsistence might be obtained at the rate of a penny a day.*

Population, therefore, and civilization have a relative effect upon each other. Where agriculture, either from want of industrious example, or from peculiar soil and climate, or from accidental discouragements and inveterate

* Turner, of the frontiers of Bootan; Morier, *Travels in Persia, &c.*; Pallas, of Siberia.

habits, has never been introduced so as to furnish the principal support, as among all the pastoral and hunting nations, the population, that is, the number of persons labouring under the evils of a rude state, must be inconsiderable, when compared with the inhabitants of the globe of which they form a part; and again, to take the converse of the proposition, wherever the population is considerable enough to be of weight in the scale, the comforts and civilization of agricultural life and fixed habitations *must* exist, not according to arbitrary or contingent circumstances, but according to the necessity of things. From these causes is derived and accounted for the remarkable fact, that European Russia yields a population of four hundred and five, Asiatic Russia, of only eleven, persons to a square mile.* And yet European Russia holds a very subordinate place, when compared in populousness with the other kingdoms of Europe, which have been longer in a state of improved civilization.

* Tooke, vol. i. p. 525.

Of the nations which have depended for subsistence on the culture of the earth, the inhabitants of Polynesia and those parts of western and southern Africa which have been chiefly visited by Europeans, are lowest in the rank of improvement. Here too we are liable to be much deceived in our idea of number.* The inhabitants of the islands, which on their first discovery were estimated at a million, have been since ascertained not to exceed three hundred thousand, even including the vast countries of New Holland and New Zealand, equaling in extent the whole of Europe. With respect to the population of Africa there is more uncertainty. It is known, however, to be thinly peopled, in those parts especially which, from a concurrence of moral causes, have hitherto remained barbarous and rude.† For the interior of

* The first discoverers were notoriously so. Cook estimated the Otaheitans at 100 000; the Protestant missionaries, at 49,000; Capt. Wilson, 16,000; Mr. Turnbull, 5,000. However, there is no doubt that the population has actually declined.

† "The population of Africa cannot exceed 30, or even 20 millions." Pinkerton. Of the extensive kingdom of

Africa must be excluded from this part of the subject. Their civilization has reached a considerable extent ; commerce is established ; a general distinction of ranks is acknowledged ; the inhabitants are collected together in towns and villages ; and that system of things exists, and appears to have long existed, which admits of moral improvement and constitutes moral probation.*

IV. After explaining the natural laws which affix these impassable limits to the number who lead a life admitting a low degree of intellectual attainment, it must be next observed, that the mode of life itself is not without its compensations. Independence, and freedom from all restraint of action, are a compensation. To know no settled home ; to fix the tent or the yourt where the cattle can find temporary subsistence, and to remove or leave it when the district is depastured, excites no idea but that of wretched-Dar Fur, Browne says, " It seems to me, from various considerations, that the number of souls within the empire cannot much exceed 200,000." Browne's Travels, 284.

* Browne, Horneman, Park. and Jackson, concur in this account.

edness to the European, who has learnt by his own habits, and those of his ancestors, to attach a value to his home, however mean ; and whose heart, from whatever distance, fondly turns to the place of his nativity or his education. The Tartar, on the contrary, can utter no severer sentence against his enemy, than that he may be condemned to reside in one place, and to be nourished with the top of a weed. And for a still ruder race, even the pastoral life is too careful and stationary. It was a proverbial imprecation in use among the hunting nations on the confines of Siberia, that their enemy might be obliged to live like a Tartar, and have the folly of troubling himself with the charge of cattle.*

* Robertson's *America*, ii. 236. Ferguson on *Civ. Society*, from Abulgaze's *Genealogy*, *Hist. of the Tartars*. " It seems universally true with regard to a people habituated to the sweets of unbounded liberty, that they are not easily tempted to resign the roving pleasures of that free condition, for the quiet, ease, security, or even luxuries of regular society. This observation may be justly applied to the true Bedouin. The Hottentot or Cherokee is not fonder of his native woods, than the wandering Arab of his sandy domain.

Nothing, indeed, can prove more evidently the charms which a wandering life, with its mixed occupations of pasturage and the chase, and a perpetually shifting scene, presenting objects to occupy, and novelty to amuse the mind, possesses to those who have followed it from their infancy, than the difficulty with which those tribes can be brought to learn the practice, and seek the certain, but uninteresting returns of agriculture. Large districts, in many parts of the north of Asia, are well suited

As his wants are few, for he knows only those of nature, so his desires are confined; for he either subdues or affects to disclaim those he cannot gratify." Wood on Homer, p. 150. "The rude tribes which have been described, are not envious of that civilization of which we are so proud. We may wonder at their ignorance and prejudice; but we must recollect that men are formed by habit, and that all their sufferings and enjoyments are comparative. How often do we see them rejoicing under hardships and bondage, and repining at their lot when courted by liberty and fortune! The feelings we receive from living in one state of society, disqualify us from judging of those of another; but he who has travelled over the greatest space will be most struck with the equal dispensation of happiness and misery; and his value for knowledge will not be decreased by observing that those are not always the most happy who possess it." Malcolm, Persia, ii. 619.

to produce various sorts of grain. The climate and soil, for instance, in the neighbourhood of the sea of Baikal, yield to few parts of Europe in fertility; and some of the poorer classes have here, as in other parts, united agriculture to pasturage.* But it affords them a feeble resource. They will not be at the pains to apply the necessary labour, and are too much attached to their nomadic habits to leave them for any length of time. The example of the foreign settlers, and even the advantages offered by the Russian government, have as yet effected so little change, that the scientific travellers to whom we owe the account of this terra incognita never fail to mention any district with evident surprise, where tillage has been pursued with tolerable success.†

Nor is there any want of enjoyment among these people. The chase itself is an enjoyment. Of this we have examples even in Europe. The Tyrolese, we know, in particular, were so

* Bell's Travels. Découv. Russes, b. iii.

† Déc. Russes, b. iii. p. 298.

addicted to it, that the tyrannical penalty of perpetual slavery could not deter them from hunting the chamois, not for its value, which was extremely trifling, but for the occupation it afforded. The Asiatic tribes have a similar passion; but they possess a greater variety of game, and hunt it with no impediment except the tributary payment of a part of the furs. Even European travellers can speak without disgust of a country, where, as in the vast territory of Mongolia, there is not a single fixed habitation to be seen; where “all the people, even the prince and high priest, live constantly in tents, and remove with their cattle from place to place as conveniency requires.”*

Some satisfaction may be derived from the description of a very inferior people, even of some of the hunting nations. The Greenlanders have habitations adapted to each season. In

* Bell's Travels, i. 275. He continues; “Satisfied with necessities, without aiming at superfluities, they pursue the most ancient and simple manner of life; which I must confess I think very pleasant in such a mild and dry climate.”

the winter they occupy warm and commodious houses, built of stone and covered with a roof of wood. The summer they pass in neat and convenient tents, regularly built of poles and covered with skins. All their contrivances are proofs of their skill and ingenuity, and their enjoyment of the lowest degree of conveniencies.* These stand certainly at the head of the class. But the whole race, with the exception of a few tribes at the very extremities of the globe, whether wandering in tents or collected in villages, strongly exemplify that active principle of the human mind, which searches for its peculiar satisfaction under all the various circumstances in which it can be placed; and is seldom disappointed. Custom renders the North American savages indifferent to the extremes of heat and cold, endows them with indefatigable activity in all their pursuits, and enables them, by the sagacity which it confers upon the senses, to meet the hazards to which their life exposes them. When they are stationary, and the business of the day is

* Forster's Observations, p. 311.

over, "the entire village sup together at the same time. The prelude to it is a dance of an hour; the dancers chanting singly their own exploits, and jointly those of their ancestors."* That these and similar habits should afford a gratification indispensably valuable to those who have been habituated to them, cannot be considered wonderful, when even Europeans have been found who have preferred such independence to the restraints of civilized life. The Baron de Casteins, it is well known, having been an officer in a regiment reduced in Canada, joined the savages, whose manners he loved, and whose language he had acquired. He was made grand chief of the nation of the Albinaquis, and amassed, from presents and other sources, a fortune of an hundred thousand crowns, which he expended in purchasing the manufactures of Europe. Though courted by the governors of New France and New England, he preferred the wilds of Acadia.†

* Ashe of the Shawanese, on the banks of the Ohio, iii. 70.

† Heriot, from Voyage de la Hontan.

The reverse has more frequently taken place, when it has been attempted to educate savages in a state of civilization. The experiment has been tried with the Hottentots, whom we might reasonably expect to be disgusted with their domestic misery, both by the East India Company and by individuals: but they have never been persuaded to buy comfort at the expense of independence, which has endeared to them the coarse manner of life to which they have been accustomed. Within a few years too, we have had an example of an intelligent chief of a tribe in North America, who conformed for a time to European habits, and lived in the best society in England;* but with no other wish or intention, than to carry back to his countrymen those advantages of civilization by which he judged they might be most usefully improved.

What, then, is the result of this evidence?

* Well remembered under the name of Norton; and leader of the Indian Allies who assisted in repelling the invasion of Canada in 1812.

Not that all situations, natural and moral, are equal; not that there is no distinction in the degree of happiness between rude and civilized man; but, that no situations in which mankind can be placed, are without a peculiar compensation and satisfaction. It has even been remarked, that the poorer the country is in which a native has lived, the more wretched his habitual manner of life, the more insupportable the loss of it has appeared;* probably because its gratifications, being few, have become on that account more dear and indispensable. But, however we may pity a taste enslaved to habits inconsistent with the improvement of the best faculties of the human species, we must at least allow that such an existence is not painful to the possessor; nay, that it has enjoyments of its own. No one, I suppose, has

* Millar, *Origin of Ranks*, p. 143. "The savage, still less than the citizen, can be made to quit that manner of life in which he is trained; he loves that freedom of mind which will not be bound to any task, and which owns no superior: and, however tempted to mix with polished nations, and to better his fortune, the first moment of liberty brings him to his woods again." *Ferguson*, part ii. s. 2.

ever been so long habituated to *positive pain*, as to regret its loss, or solicit its return, or complain of the ease which he has acquired by the relaxation of some tormenting disorder.

V. It is an inevitable consequence of the connexion between the bodily and mental faculties, that climate should affect the character of the human species. Neither could Montesquieu's untenable theory have been supported by so many appeals to fact, unless it had possessed some foundation in the general, though by no means insuperable tendency of climate to maintain peculiar habits and dispositions. The natives of tropical countries, and of those which I have been just now mentioning, are perhaps, taken in the mass, in about the same degree of civilization; but, from the difference of climate, their occupations, as well as their recreation and pastimes, must be altogether different. The compensations, therefore, of their rude state are equally different; but peculiarly suited to the climate, and the disposition it generates. That activity which ren-

ders occupation amusement to the native of more temperate regions, is unknown, and would probably be destructive, near the line. There, inactivity is enjoyment: and, accordingly, to the countries of which we are speaking, the abundance of the necessaries of life, and the ease with which they are commonly produced, afford a compensation for the loss of those advantages which more civilized nations enjoy.

How much interest and admiration the first accounts of the South Sea islanders excited, will be long remembered. The ease enjoyed in a country where three or four fruit-trees furnished a provision sufficient for the consumption of a grown person during eight months, and the consequent plenty which appeared to abound, astonished those who had been accustomed to the labour of less bountiful and genial climates. The exertion that was required to lodge, to subsist, or clothe a family, seemed to be mere amusement to those who had experienced the fatigue, but could not

appreciate the use and value, of closer and more rigid occupation. Longer acquaintance has shown, that ease and idleness engender vices, more baneful in their effects to happiness than the opposite evils of civilized life : but still the free use of the corporeal powers, the unrestrained liberty of action, the absence of all care respecting the support of a family, must be admitted as a set-off against the cruelties of frequent hostility, and the want of refined gratifications. These advantages of an indulgent climate are evident by comparison ; for the natives who possess them, though with no other superiority or nearer approach to civilization, have obtained, in a much higher degree, the conveniences of life than the savages in the neighbourhood of Cape Horn, or their brethren in the less favoured islands of the Pacific.

These, however, are at the very bottom of the scale. Forced, probably, from their native continent by the overflow of population, or driven by stress of weather, they originally

depended upon the natural abundance of their adopted country, till all remembrance of former arts was lost among them; and when a new generation began in its turn to be pressed by the difficulties arising from multiplication, every thing was to be learnt anew and effected by invention, without any of the advantages resulting from communication with more improved people. The African Negroes, therefore, as in advantages, so in acquisitions, are one step above them. It may be thought also, that circumnavigators, to whom we owe the descriptions of the inhabitants of Polynesia, may be deceived into a report too favourable for truth, by the luxury of fresh provisions, and the pleasing associations with the sight of land. But even long residents in Africa have been struck with the happiness of the Negroes of the western coast, and their perfect enjoyment of life, resulting from ease, carelessness, and security. The indispensable articles of life are reduced to a very narrow compass; the heat of the climate, which renders clothing an incumbrance and lodging a matter of indiffer-

ence, enables the Negro to exist on his native soil "in the most agreeable apathy, without either the fear of want, the chagrin of privation, the cares of ambition, or the arbour of desire."* Twenty days' labour in the year is sufficient for the cultivation of all the articles of subsistence he requires; his existence, therefore, is almost a gratuitous gift of nature: his wants are supplied without severe exertion, his desires are gratified without restraint; and, with a few solitudes or apprehensions, his life glides on in a sort of tranquil calm.†

* Golberry, vol. ii. p. 303. Corry on the Windward Coast, chap. 6. Lest the reports collected by the benevolent authors of the abolition of the slave-trade (see Clarkson, &c.) should be considered as somewhat exaggerated, I have selected, by choice, two authors who countenance that execrable traffic, as Golberry in France and Corry in England, that the account derived from them of the happiness of the Africans in their native country, may not be overcharged.

† So Mr. Jackson of Morocco: "Living on simple food, chiefly of the farinaceous kind, their appetites are few, their wants are easily satisfied, and their resources many." P. 151.

In northern climates, the natives, if not employed in those active exercises to which I alluded as forming their amusement as well as their occupation, must be confined in narrow apartments, where the want of circulating air would be as unsalutary as the inactivity of the body. In the southern latitudes, shelter from the sun's rays is alone required. Under the shade, therefore, of a tree, or the roof of the palaver-house which belongs to every principal village, and which the air is freely allowed to penetrate, the Negroes form an assembly at sunrise; and as they are ranged in a circle consisting of thirty or forty of all ages, pass the time in conversation. Their subjects are inexhaustible; and the amusement thus furnished is so attractive, that they separate with great reluctance, sometimes passing the entire day in talking, smoking, and diversion.* The evenings are devoted to dancing: for, after the setting of

* "Even towards evening I often observed these coteries in the same place, and conducted with the same gaiety and spirit: the conversation being as animated as if it had just begun." Golberry. Cook observes the same of the Friendly Islanders; *Third Voyage*, vol. i.

the sun, every village resounds with songs and music; and "I have often," says Mr. Corry, "listened to them with attention and pleasure, during the tranquil evenings of the dry season."*

Persons, whose judgment is swayed by no hypothesis, and who have had long opportunities of observing the habits of a people, cannot easily be mistaken as to the mere fact, whether life is miserable or comfortable. And this careless disposition, so different from what we are accustomed to witness, may be accounted for by considering, that in most European countries the climate introduces a thousand wants; the varieties of season must be counteracted by a variety of expedients; desire is always athirst for some new conveniency, and furnishes, by the very uneasiness it occasions, a stimulus to the industry by which arts and sciences, and all the embellishments of humanity, are improved. But in these tropical countries, the indulgence of the climate at the same time diminishes the number of wants,

* P. 153.

and render indispensable gratifications of easy acquirement.* The consequence is, that among civilized nations the inclinations are under a constant restraint, either moral or physical. The restraint, no doubt, is useful, and conduces to render the European what he is, the most improved of the human race. But it is also usually unpalatable, and sometimes burdensome. The easy life, therefore, and the security as to the future resulting from it, which the African and other nations in similar circumstances enjoy, must be acknowledged as a mitigation of the evils to which in their turn they are subject, and a compensation for the inferior rank they hold in the great aggregate of human society.

* “According to the ideas of the common people in South America, all that is necessary to happiness, is bananas, salted fish, a hammock, and a guitar. The hope of gain is a weak stimulus, under a zone where beneficent nature provides to man a thousand means of procuring an easy and peaceful subsistence.” Humboldt, vol. iii. p. 92.

“During the whole time that I resided in Africa, and in all the countries which I visited, I never saw a single poor beggar.” Golberry.

The indifference with which all these nations regard their actual situation, and the slight exertions which any of them are disposed to make for the purpose of bettering their condition, must surely be considered as a proof that the positive pressure of misery is not severe.* No accounts affirm, that they are indifferent to pain, so as not to step aside when it may be avoided; or that, when urged by hunger, they refuse to appease it. The exertion by which a better habitation, a more sufficient clothing, more cleanly, nutritious, or palatable food

* "The miserable and forlorn condition of the poor Pese-
serais appeared dreadful to us, who were accustomed to the
conveniencies of a civilized life; but habit, together with in-
dolence and stupidity, render these hardships supportable,
and they have hardly an idea that their situation can be im-
proved." Forster, 313. "Such is the disposition of the
Indians, that if their indifference to temporal things did not
extend itself also to the eternal, they might be said to equal the
happiness of the golden age. They show so little concern for
the enjoyments of life, as nearly approaches to a total contempt
of them." Ulloa, i. 420. This accords with the description
given by Giraldus of the Irish in the twelfth century: *Solùm
otio dediti, solùm desidiæ dati, summas reputant delicias la-
bore carere; summas reputant divitias libertate gaudere.*"

might be obtained, is only one step beyond the natural instinct that prompts these spontaneous actions; and the unwillingness to use that exertion must be admitted as evidence that the evils in question do not press upon the mind, so as to produce actual unhappiness. For it is to be remembered, that in the same state of savage life, evils that do press, lead to action, and to a sort of foresight the very reverse of the general character. There is an instance of this nature in the cruel kindness of the American women, who are said to feel so sensibly the miseries to which their sex is exposed under the dominion of barbarous husbands, as to destroy their female children in their infancy, in "order to deliver them from that intolerable bondage to which they know they are doomed." *

Since all evil depends upon consciousness, and suffering which is not felt, is unintelligible; some authors have made the insensibility of an uncivilized people as to their condition,

* Robertson's America, ii. 106.

the ground of an argument for the equality of all conditions. But I would by no means appear to go that length. There is a great difference between actual misery, and a low capacity for happiness: there is a great difference between a mind satisfied with few enjoyments, and one alive and awakened to every species of refined gratification. As the native of an unenlightened country may act up to the moral views he enjoys, and yet be very deficient in morality; so may the native of an uncivilized country possess a portion of enjoyment which will yet admit of much improvement, both in degree and in purity. The considerations, therefore, which have been urged, though sufficient to vindicate the divine goodness in these points, can never interfere with the expediency, nay, I may add, the positive duty of meliorating the condition and informing the understanding of these rude children of nature. That they are in a state of general inferiority; that their reasoning powers lie dormant; that the nature of their gratifications being of a lower order, their capacity of hap-

piness is diminished in proportion ; as it can never be denied, so it will always supply a reason for communicating to them the benefits of superior civilization.

It has been already stated as probable, that the thin and scattered tribes who have no other subsistence than the produce of the chase, together with the savage inhabitants of Polynesia, that is, the lowest species of the human race, do not exceed in number two or three millions in the whole. The wretchedness of this barbarism, besides its being, from the apathy it superinduces, less appalling in existence than in recital, cannot be allowed to have much weight in the scale, when compared with that immense community of which it forms so trifling a part. If to these are added the nations of Africa and northern Asia, who enjoy few, comparatively, of those advantages, moral and intellectual, which collisions of interest and opinion confer upon a state of civilization, the number will fairly be estimated at about twenty millions ; but cannot exceed, according

to some calculations a fortieth, according to others a fiftieth, of the inhabitants of the globe. And it was sufficiently shown, that the inconsiderable relation which this part bears to the whole does not depend upon accidental circumstances, but upon inviolable laws; which must be deemed an express provision for correcting the evils which there is a tendency in the general system to produce. It will scarcely be pretended, that so slight a flaw could detract from the merits of a system, upon which the improvement of the faculties of the whole human race is hinged. But even if this could be pretended, the divine benevolence has vindicated itself by contriving that each peculiar evil should be accompanied by its peculiar compensation. The independence or indolence of a savage or semi-barbarous state, though feeble extenuations with respect to the improvement or perfection of the species, are of great importance with regard to the actual state of the individual; inasmuch as positive pain and suffering are more immediate and pressing evils than

moral or mental deficiency. A dispensation of the Governor of the universe may, in his future counsels, correct the one ; but any future dispensation, though it may compensate, can never alleviate the other.

VI. But the point of principal consequence, and in which the wisdom and goodness of the Deity are equally concerned, is this : that the same source from which the evil itself proceeds, also produces its remedy. A rude community, which a concurrence of circumstances may have precluded from agricultural resources, pushes itself to some inclement corner of the habitable world, and continues its existence without increasing its numbers. Another people, more fortunate in the moral and natural causes which contribute to civilize the world, extend their growing population beyond the crowded limits of their own kingdom, and, with their population, convey the stock of improvement which has accumulated in a long period of years. The manner in which this effect

takes place, and the beneficial changes which it is every where continually operating, have been shown under a former head.

Europe is now the centre, from which the rays of civilization are diverging in every direction; and there is no region of the world in which its influence is not annually diminishing both the degree and the quantity of evil arising from the absence of cultivation. It has indeed been sometimes suggested as probable, that each quarter of the globe may be destined to take its turn in civilization; that Asia, having reached its acmé first, has gradually declined, and yielded its precedence to Europe; that Europe may already see a future rival in the increasing importance of America; and that the comparative facility of intercourse from that continent may at some distant period give to Africa an opportunity, which cannot be at present foreseen, of asserting its superiority over nations whom it has hitherto known chiefly as oppressors. But this is neither a very pleasing theory, nor very agreeable to philosophical ex-

perience. For, although it is true, that civilization was earliest attained in Asia, there may be reasonable doubts whether that civilization was ever higher in degree, than Asia, considered generally, enjoys at present. And although single kingdoms are subject to decline and fall, and their maturity itself sometimes contains the seeds of their dissolution; yet there is no reason, from past history, to apprehend that civilization, founded on agriculture and sustained by Christianity, can ever be so far depreciated by internal corruption, or annihilated by external enemies, as to lose all weight in the scale, however it may sink in relative importance by the preponderance of other nations. For, since a country does not diminish its own lustre by diffusing light to others, but, on the contrary, obtains a reciprocal advantage from such communication, it is more natural, and more consonant to experience, to indulge the hope that some future, however distant æra, will find the whole world in a comparatively equal state of civilization.*

* Stewart's Phil. chap. iv. s. 8.

In the mean time, whilst it is distinctly acknowledged that the classes into whose condition an inquiry has been made, have the lowest opportunities of exercising their reason and virtue; and that it is the evil of a system, from which evil confessedly is not excluded, to produce some classes with these low opportunities; we should still err on the other side by conceiving that their situation is inconsistent with the purposes of man's creation. Wherever there is a perception of right and wrong, there is a capacity of probation, more or less imperfect. But as, in every country, the general principles of justice and humanity are to be traced, however obscured by error; there is a sort of moral probation going on in every condition to which the human race can be exposed.* The prospect indeed of hardships and

* "There is no situation in which a rational being is placed, from that of the best instructed Christian down to the condition of the rudest barbarian, which affords not room for moral agency; for the acquisition, exercise, and display of voluntary qualities good and bad. Health and sickness, enjoyment and suffering, riches and poverty, know-

difficulties endured by uncivilized communities, is often enlivened by the unexpected appearance of some moral beauty, for which we could scarcely look in so inclement a situation. One of the early visitants of the South Sea islands could not refrain, he says, from repeatedly wishing that our civilized Europeans might add to their many advantages, “the same innocence

ledge and ignorance, power and subjection, liberty and bondage, civilization and barbarity, have all their offices and duties, all serve for the *formation* of character; for, when we speak of a state of trial, it must be remembered, that characters are not only tried, or proved, or detected, but that they are generated also, and *formed* by circumstances. The best dispositions may subsist under the most depressed, the most afflictive fortunes. A West Indian slave, who, with his wrongs, retains his benevolence, I for my part look upon as amongst the foremost of human characters for the rewards of virtue. The kind master of such a slave, that is, he who in the exercise of an inordinate authority, postpones, in any degree, his own interest to his slave's comfort, is likewise a meritorious character; but still he is inferior to his slave. All, however, which I contend for is, that these destinies, opposite as they may be in every other view, are both trials, and equally such. The observation may be applied to every other condition; to the whole range of the scale, not excepting even its lowest extremity.” Paley's Nat. Theol. 528.

of heart and genuine simplicity of manners, the same spirit of benevolence," that he found among their rude inhabitants.* He mentions also having seen mothers punishing obstinacy and disobedience, and, though extremely fond of their children, doing violence to their feelings, that the children might not acquire habits of ingratitude, obstinacy, or immorality. A later resident, whose intercourse with the natives gave him every opportunity of judging, observes that their patriarchal mode of life, in which the younger and inferior part always surround the chief, as the father of one large family, is calculated much to refine and improve their mental faculties, and polish their language and behaviour.† In these islands, the want of regular government is the grand existing evil. Among other barbarous tribes, a different disposition supplies the place of law. When the Spanish fathers in Mexico explained to some of the natives, who adhered to their own habits, the security which prevailed in the

* Forster, p. 349, 351.

† Narrative of four Years' Residence at Tongataboo.

Christian missions, where an Indian alcalde administered justice, the chief replied, “ ‘This order of things may be necessary for you. We do not steal, and seldom disagree : what use have we, then, for an alcalde amongst us?’ ” * We are told also by Golberry, that in Africa there is commonly “ very little disorder, so that the small number of offences produces a sort of habitual tranquillity.” †

Traits of character not less interesting are to be found among the shepherds of Asia. Po-

* Humboldt, vol. ii. 303. “ In their intercourse with strangers the Shoshonees are frank and communicative, in their dealings perfectly fair ; nor have we had, during our stay with them, any reason to suspect that the display of our new and valuable wealth has tempted them to a single act of dishonesty. While they have generally shared with us the little they possess, they have always abstained from begging any from us.” Lewis and Clarke’s Travels.

† Vol. ii. p. 305, “ Charlevoix has observed, that the nations among whom he travelled in North America, never mentioned acts of generosity or kindness, under the notion of duty ; they acted from affection as they acted from appetite, without regard to its consequences. When they had done a kindness, they had gratified a desire.” Ferguson, p. 11. s. 2.

verty, we are assured, is in no disgrace among them. When a family is unfortunate, the richer members of the tribe unite to set them up again with cattle, as far as three separate times; if their ill fate still pursues them, they become labourers, but no one ever upbraids them with their humiliation, and they are clothed and fed as well as those whom they serve.* Their attention to the rites of hospitality is proverbial, and indisputably proves their acquaintance with the first principles of morals. Of the Kalmucks in particular, it is related, that, though of a warm and sanguine temperament, they live more peaceably among themselves than would be expected of a people in such an independent state. They seldom come to blows, even at their drinking parties, and their quarrels are very rarely bloody. Though their anger is tinged with ferocity, murder is little known among them. In this respect it seems, that their religion, idolatrous

* Découv. Russes, of the Barattes, vi. 124.

as it is, has been able to modify their natural temper.*

To come nearer home : the surveys of some counties in Ireland bring us acquainted with a people scarcely more cultivated, and equally susceptible of the virtues belonging to their condition. "In more minutely examining the situation of this abandoned peasantry, we have an opportunity of seeing far into human nature, and behold the natives happy, and abundantly

* Gmelin, *Déc. Russes*, iii. 233, &c. In physical advantages no country has a lower place than Iceland. "Yet here," says Sir G. Mackenzie, "the moral and religious habits of the people at large may be spoken of in terms of the highest commendation. In his domestic capacity, the Icelandic performs all the duties which his situation requires, or renders possible; and while by the severe labour of his hands he obtains a provision of food for his children, it is not less his care to convey to their minds the inheritance of knowledge and virtue. In his intercourse with those around him, his character displays the stamp of honour and integrity. His religious duties are performed with cheerfulness and punctuality; and this even among the numerous obstacles which are presented by the nature of the country and climate under which he lives." P. 332.

possessed of those qualities which endear mankind to each other. In acts of friendship to their neighbours, they are rarely deficient: their generous hospitality to strangers is proverbial: for educating their children they are particularly anxious, and a close attention to religion is universally prevalent; and though their idea of it may be strongly tinged with superstition, it only argues that their minds have been totally neglected; as they show a great wish and anxiety for instruction even in religious concerns.”* Another inquirer assures us, that “the heart of the poorest cotter is no stranger to generous feelings; his jug of milk, and plate of potatoes, are charitably offered alike to the errand-boy, and to the mendicant who appears before his door: in short, charity throughout the whole island supplies the place of poor laws.”†

These instances make it sufficiently clear,

* Mr. Tighe's Survey of the County of Kilkenny.

† Sir Richard Hoare's general remarks, at the close of his Tour in Ireland. 1806.

that no argument can be raised against the goodness of the Deity, as if he had placed a portion of mankind in situations inconsistent with the object of their creation. It certainly could not be held just, that a man should be the subject either of punishment or reward, where his condition afforded him no opportunities of virtue. But it appears, that although the degrees of light diffused throughout the world are various, there is no where total darkness; and that although civilization, as originally proved, is the climate most favourable to virtue, there is no state where the seeds of morality are not planted, or refuse to thrive. Before, therefore, any derogation can be made on this score, from the evidence by which the divine goodness is supported, it must be maintained, that the Deity is either unable or unwilling to make compensation or allowance, in his future disposal of mankind, for whatever moral deficiencies arise from that general scheme, by which he has seen it best upon the whole to regulate the world.

CONCLUSION.

IN the first volume of this work I endeavoured to show, that the evidence in favour of the existence of an independent, eternal, and omnipotent Creator, is such as to demand the assent of mankind.

In the considerations, which followed, of the attributes belonging to the Creator, I attempted to point out a remarkable proof of the wisdom with which the Creator has organized our world, and directed its various parts in subservience to his general designs. I also examined the objections which have most commonly been urged against the goodness of the Deity ; and have proved, I imagine, at least thus much : that neither the existence, nor the extent, of natural and moral evil, can interfere with that belief

of the benevolence of the Creator, which the preponderating tendency of his works inclines us to entertain.

It only remains to consider the practical conclusions resulting from what has been proved; without which the judicious person who proposed the subject, rightly foresaw that any enquiry into the existence and attributes of the Deity would be a needless and unprofitable speculation.

Is, then, the existence of a Being endued with these attributes, and enabling us to discover the relation we bear towards him by the reasoning powers of which he has made us partakers, a mere matter of philosophical disquisition, a speculative fact, which we are as much at liberty to neglect or examine, to allow or reject, as the Newtonian theory of the tides, or law of gravitation? Far otherwise. It cannot be plausibly maintained, that no relative duty on our part arises as a consequence from what is the certain conclusion of these inquiries; viz.

that we derive our being from an eternal Creator, infinitely powerful, wise, and just ; who has placed us here in a state preparatory to a future and higher sphere of existence. Since our reason declares to us his existence, his power, his wisdom, and his goodness, he has a title to our adoration, our veneration, our submission, and our love.

I. Against this deduction I can suppose it may be urged, that, although we may acknowledge such a Being as the Creator of the world, yet, if he demanded the worship or obedience of mankind, he would declare his existence, and display his power, by such regular and frequent interference, as should never permit his creatures to lose sight of their Creator. Why is the claim of the Deity upon our faith and reverence left to be discovered by a slow process of uncertain effect, which a clearer manifestation of our relation towards him would have undeniably secured.

This question may be partly met, by appealing

to the Christian revelation. Natural theology, however, requires another answer: neither is the Christian revelation hitherto made universal; and numerous generations passed away before it was made at all.* Let us consider the question on other grounds.

Undoubtedly the Deity, had he seen fit, might have devised modes of declaring himself, unknown to us at present. But it is easier for us to conceive the possibility of this, than to explain the precise manner which should have been consistent with his views respecting mankind. Interferences so regular or sensible, as constantly to enforce the dependence of man upon his Creator, must take place, it is obvious, either in the natural or the moral world. But

* With regard to this subject, Paley's remark is important: "The *dispensation* of Christianity may already be universal. That part of mankind which never heard of Christ's name, may nevertheless be redeemed, that is, be placed in a better condition, with respect to their future state, by his intervention; may be the objects of his benignity and intercession, as well as of the propitiatory virtue of his passion." Nat. Theol. 530.

in the natural world, the Creator, with his power and wisdom, is already conspicuously displayed. We perceive it in harmony ; would we see it in disorder ? We feel it in mercy ; would we dread it in destruction ? For what, except perpetual habit, and consequent unconcern, could prevent our acknowledging divine omnipotence, not merely, “ as the poor Indian,” in the winds and storms, but in every object which the natural world presents ? Any visible interposition of the Creator’s power, be it remembered, must be either regular or partial ; if it is partial, it disturbs, it overturns the established constitution of things ; if it is regular, its effect is lost by frequency, and identified with what by general consent is termed the order of nature. This effect might be anticipated beforehand ; and it is exemplified in the history of the Jews.

It will be confessed, I imagine, that these difficulties do not admit of obvious solution, and we shall be referred to the moral world, as

a proper theatre for the constant superintendence of God. For instance, by the present dispensation of affairs, we daily see those gifts of fortune which are thought most valuable, and which indisputably afford the most probable means of enjoyment, bestowed on those who deserve them little, and employ them worse; we see offered gratuitously to men of careless or vicious dispositions a more flattering prospect of worldly prosperity, than industry can secure to the most laborious, or goodness to the most virtuous of men. To correct this injustice of fortune, why does not Providence interpose? why does not God display his omniscience by rewarding conspicuous merit, and visiting notorious vice by immediate chastisement? Suppose it granted, that, upon a wide and general view of things, it appears to be the natural effect of virtue to exalt, and of vice to depress the individual character in the estimation of society; and that the Supreme Disposer has thus afforded to a careful observer an evidence of his aversion to vice, and preference of

virtue ; * yet why does he suffer so many exceptions to arise, that the part he takes is not immediately discernible ? why not visibly interfere, to obviate those contradictions of his general plan which embarrass and perplex mankind ?

Now, it is plain that this imaginary scheme would not be so far complete, as to be reconcileable even with human notions of strict justice, unless it extended universally from the highest to the lowest degrees of vice and virtue. If otherwise, since we find every different shade of each among mankind, how slight must the distinction be between the last that is visited, and the first that is overlooked ! How impossible to decide, where the rewarding angel shall stop, or the minister of death begin !

It is perhaps just conceivable, that a few extreme cases might be punished or rewarded,

* This may be considered as decisively established by Butler's chapter on the Moral Government of God, Anal. part i. ch. iii.

without a total subversion of the present order of things. But this would establish the existence of God at the expense of the justice which it was intended to display. For, what justice would there be in rewarding the small portion who had attained the highest rank of virtue, if the larger number were neglected, who were left, at different intervals, a short degree behind? Or if notorious vice were suddenly and visibly followed by disease, or pain, or death; the dispensation would be no less imperfect, unless the degrees of punishment were made as various as those of guilt.

An immediate distribution, then, of rewards and punishments, could not be just, if it were not exact and universal; but if it were exact and universal, it would be inconsistent with the purpose of our existence in this world as a state of preparation. If you interfere with respect to a few, you add injustice to inequality; if with respect to all, you raise divine justice on the ruins of human liberty and accountable agency, which requires the free exercise of

reason; while the free exercise of reason supposes a motive sufficient to sway, but insufficient to constrain.

It does not need much argument to prove, that a course of virtuous conduct, preserving its even tenour, as the present state of the world frequently demands, in spite of all hinderance from temporary obstacles, and conforming to what is believed to be the will of God, against pressing motives of immediate interest, really constitutes a character far superior in meritorious worth to one whose habits have been formed under a prospect of direct reward, or disciplined by the fear of immediately impending evil. If the thing required were merely the performance of a particular action or set of actions, to bring about a certain event; then it is true, that the motive on which they were done would be a point of subordinate importance. But if the object is the trial and formation of moral character, as in the case of man's probationary state; then the *habit*, and not the *action*, becomes the prin-

cial concern: and under this view of the subject, he will not have looked far, or wisely, into human nature, who shall conclude that any advantage would be gained by overturning what experience shows to be the usual course of God's moral government, and substituting immediate retribution.

It is not asserted, that there would be no room for merit or demerit in human actions, if the divine superintendence were more sensibly exercised in this world. No motives exterior to the being on which they work, can render an agent absolutely passive. But they make him approach nearer to it, in proportion as they render his passions, rather than his reason, the motive to influence his election. For example: the object of human legislation being mainly the prevention of crimes, it becomes comparatively of little consequence by what motive men are deterred from committing them. It is, therefore, the wish of the legislator that the punishment should follow the offence, if possible, not only certainly, but

speedily and visibly, because it is known to be then most effectual. Yet still, under the most arbitrary governments, or best administered police, it is impossible so strictly to watch the conduct of individuals as to hinder their being, in the proper as well as literal meaning of the phrase, free agents: whether they abstain from crime through fear of the penalty, or commit it in the hope of eluding discovery. Reason has full opportunity to balance the contending motives, and decide between them. But if the officer and executioner were immediately present, the one ready to consign the offender to the punishment which the other is equally at hand to inflict, the crime would certainly be prevented; but such innocence could not be termed virtue, or the man a free agent, though the use of his limbs was not absolutely restrained. So, if the divine interference descended immediately upon good or evil actions, little room would be left for moral probation. Under the present constitution of things, the conclusions of reason, the dictates of con-

science, the prospect of future reward, of which the imperfection of earthly retribution affords one very ample testimony, propose a rational motive for the performance of virtue, and the rejection of illegal gratifications; and a compliance with these motives, in conformity to the supposed will of God, unites the virtue of faith to that of morality. But if a course of virtuous conduct were made the certain road to temporal prosperity; or if it were as much the natural order of things for lightning to strike the guilty head, as for thunder to follow lightning, the springs of action would be deranged; the exercise of faith would be precluded; servile fear alone would deter from vice, and selfish expectation become the leading motive to virtue. Even though there is some truth in the observation, that all virtue and vice is, ultimately, a balance of advantages, and that interest, more or less distant, is at the bottom of all our determinations; yet no one can deny, that reason is more soundly and nobly exercised in weighing future against present retri-

bution, than if her determination were influenced by the fear of immediate evil, or the certainty of temporal reward.

Should any one object, that the Hebrews, who are represented as a nation peculiarly favoured, were placed under the dispensations of temporal rewards and punishments, the circumstances of their history will explain this exception. The Hebrews were selected from the general mass of mankind, for the particular purpose of preserving the doctrine of the unity and the records of the creation, till the wider promulgation of these and other important truths by the Messiah. Now, it is very evident, from what we know of the rebellious spirit of that people, and from the temptations and examples of idolatry with which they were surrounded, that the comparatively remote sanctions of a future state of retribution would not have sufficed to keep up that allegiance which the office intrusted to them required; since such were the difficulties to which their faith was exposed, that their allegiance was

scarcely maintained even by the immediate punishment inflicted upon their disobedience; and the knowledge of a Creator and moral Governor was not less preserved by his visitations of their offences, than by their observance of his laws. In proportion as the state of civilization is low, and the moral habits are depraved, both severity and quick execution of punishment become necessary.* Both may be observed in the Jewish code; the latter, in the extraordinary providence which superintended them, which avenged heinous wick-

* "The spirit and behaviour of the Israelites in the wilderness is a very remarkable instance of the wretched effects of servitude upon the human soul. They had been slaves to the Egyptians about 140 years: their spirits were debased, their judgments weak, their sense of God and religion very low: their taste so mean and so illiberal, that the plenty of Egypt weighed more with them than all the divine assurances and demonstrations, that they should be raised to the noblest privileges, the highest honours and felicity, as a peculiar treasure to God, above all people in the world. Therefore the wisdom of God determined that they should not attempt to take possession of the promised land, till the generation of slaves, viz. all above twenty years of age, were dead and buried."—Taylor's Scheme of Divinity, Ess. ii. 7.

edness on some occasions, and, on others, corrected the remissness of the civil magistrate:* the former, in the continuation of the punishment to the posterity of the offender; “which the instinctive fondness of parents to their offspring would make terrible even to those who had hardened themselves into an insensibility of personal punishment.”† This peculiar case, therefore, confirms the distinction I have drawn, between the performance of a prescribed action, and the exaltation of a moral character. In the single exception of the Hebrews, their accomplishment of the object to which their nation was destined, was of importance paramount to their attainment of that higher tone of virtue which results from the pious exercise of the reasoning powers; and on this account, their religion was enforced by those temporal sanctions which were suited to the degree of mental civilization in that early age; and more surely efficacious in stemming

* Deut. xxvii. 16. Prov. xxx. 17.

† Warburton's Div. Leg. v. 5.

the torrent of corruption which flowed on every side of their narrow territory.*

II. The objections, however, which are founded on the want of a visible interference on the part of the Creator, to acquaint mankind with their duty, would be far more reasonable, if no records remained of his ever having interfered at all. It has been shown that frequent interpositions would be subversive of man's highest and most rational probation, and therefore inconsistent with God's designs respecting him. But an interposition may be made once, and among a peculiar people, and in a single age, without either blunting the feelings of the bulk of mankind, or destroying the freedom of their moral energies; nay, it may even

* Mahomet succeeded in impressing the doctrine of a future life upon a very low degree of civilization. But the rewards and punishments promised by the Koran, are represented under images well adapted both to the dispositions and understandings of the people to whom it was addressed. It presupposes a state of some advancement, to look for rewards such as "neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor it has entered into the heart of man to conceive."

heighten, in a great degree, the perfection and purity of their moral trial. Such an interposition, recorded by the unexceptionable testimony of those who first witnessed it, becomes, in effect, an interposition to all future ages: but then it is an interposition addressed to the reason, and not to the senses of mankind.* It has been remarked, with no friendly feelings towards Revelation, that circumstances, originally doubtful, become no more certain at last, though they have been long remembered: but the converse of the proposition must be equally admitted, that what was true two or three thousand years ago, loses none of its authenticity

* "The dispensation among the Jews, like a piece of leaven which leaveneth the whole mass, was intended for the benefit of all mankind: as by this means they became examples and instructors, while they remained in their own country, to all their neighbours; and when in captivity or dispersion, as they carried with them the knowledge of God into the countries where they were dispersed, till the nations should, by this and other means of improvement, be prepared to receive the clearer revelation of the true God, and of eternal life, by the Messiah."—Taylor's Scheme of Divinity, Ess. xxvii.

by time. The existence of a superintending Creator, which was evident to the Jews, when, on the certainty of that fact, supported, as it was, by a series of fresh miracles, they established their civil and religious polity, is rendered no less certain to us by the uninterrupted annals of their history. The miraculous proof of Jesus's divine commission, which was *sensibly* evident to Peter and the other apostolical martyrs, is *morally* evident to us, and will continue so till it is disproved that they voluntarily subjected themselves to oppression and death, in belief and attestation of the fact.

In truth, the mode of displaying himself which the Author of the universe has chosen, while it is free from the objections which would attend the placing all mankind under a visible theocracy, affords an unexceptionable opportunity of probation, adapted to exercise the highest faculties of a reasonable being. The divine plan, as far as we are able to trace it, exhibits a design of giving our faculties this exertion, and of making belief not a necessary

assent of the mind, but, in a certain sense, a moral virtue. Throughout the sacred writings there is a remarkable absence of all endeavour to avoid, or meet, or satisfy objections. And that a sceptical mind, determined to reject what it cannot reduce to a pre-conceived standard of probability, may find, both in the Jewish and Christian revelations, things inscrutable to its limited powers, it would be either inconsiderate or hypocritical to deny. Free inquirers say, that they should expect the very contrary. I should expect the contrary, in an imposture; or at least an attempt to obviate such objections: but if I find them in what indubitable evidence forces me to receive as revelation, then it becomes my business to inquire, whether no end could be proposed or answered by leaving things as they are.

Suppose, then, that the facts which Revelation has declared respecting the creation and final destination of man were rendered as sensibly clear to us as his existence or dissolution, a principal opportunity of making out their

probation and displaying their moral faculties would be taken away from half the civilized world. From the constitution of things, there must always be a large proportion of persons whom want of education or leisure incapacitates from inquiring into the grounds and evidence of their faith. The same may be observed of many in a higher class, whom youth and ignorance make too careless to doubt, and pleasure too giddy to inquire. These of necessity must be instructed in their faith from the conviction of others: and to act in conformity with the religious belief they thus adopt, is to them a sufficient trial. But there is still another class, not inconsiderable in number, whose rational desires are satisfied by enjoyment, and whom refinement of taste, absence of passion, love of personal character, or the noble resources of a cultivated understanding, withdraw from all temptation to irregular indulgences. Their probation is that of the mind; which is required to subdue its pride and discard its prejudices, and with candour and simplicity to examine Revelation, and hold an impartial

balance between moral evidence and speculative objections.* For, as to the testimony on which it is to be received, Revelation has, from its first promulgation, appealed to human reason; and only after that evidence is acknowledged, refuses reason as a judge of its consistency with the nature and supposed intentions of its Author. In points where human experience can afford no clue of direction, there Revelation requires submission to superior wisdom.

For example: the plurality of worlds has sometimes been employed as an argument against the truth of Christianity. Philosophy, it is urged, assures us how inconsiderable a speck in an immense system is formed by our globe: how then could it be esteemed so important as to give birth to the plan of redemption? how can we imagine that a design so profound would be limited to so insignificant a portion of an immeasurable whole? This ob-

* See Butler, Anal. p. ii. ch. vi.

jection, and those of a similar nature as to the partial diffusion of Christianity, presume that man has a claim upon his Creator not only for what knowledge concerns his own personal conduct or interest, but for the development of all the mysteries of his counsels. This, therefore, though not the most rational objection to the Christian revelation, may serve to instance a very common species of error, which arises from an assumed notion, that a revelation intended for our rule of life would be liable to no objections at all, but by the clearness of its evidence would enforce a belief almost as natural and intuitive, as we feel of our own existence.

If, however, we admit, that mental obedience is a very important mode of probation; and that a moral habit of mind, well regulated to submission, is as requisite to the reception of certain truths, as to the observance of certain duties; then we have not only the antecedent probability so ably set forth by Butler, that objections would appear against a scheme

so partially disclosed to us as that of Revelation ; but we also understand, that there seem wise reasons why God has not thought fit to give mankind either demonstrative or sensitive proofs of its truth, but such moral evidence alone as should constitute a sort of mental probation. To examine the antecedent probability and the positive evidence which unite to establish Revelation, is the province of reason : but when the strength of this various testimony appears, as surely it must appear, indisputable and incontrovertible, all irrelevant or intrusive inquiry must be regulated, if not suspended ; and it becomes the duty of reason, with more of devout admiration, than of curious research, to submit to that superior wisdom which is implied in the creation of the world, and displayed in its intelligible phenomena. To reject Revelation unexamined, or examined cursorily, is contumacy : to admit into the examination prejudice, or self-conceived opinions, is pride. The true and practical morality of the mind consists in avoiding these errors : a virtue no less probationary, no

less difficult perhaps to some men, in whom error has taken early root, than a correspondence of their actions to their belief is found by others. The evidence of Revelation being that concerning which we are called upon to decide, is founded on what our experience enables us to judge of; namely, on the nature of man, and on the excellence of the precepts which are enjoined as the rule of life: the objections, on the contrary, are founded on what is confessedly beyond our experience; namely, the counsels of God, their object, and final extent, and the best means of accomplishing them. Is it not then as inconsistent with reason as it is with virtue, to permit a part of the subject which by the nature of things is unfathomable to our faculties, to interfere with our conviction of what we can, and do understand? Can there be any thing venial in a scepticism of which religion is the subject, which would be deemed contemptible in the unimportant inquiries of philosophy?

If there is any justice in these observations,

the practical question with which I set out is answered in the affirmative; and there *is* a duty incumbent on mankind from the facts disclosed by natural religion and confirmed by Revelation, which they are responsible for discharging faithfully. Nor is it usual to find the main facts respecting the existence or attributes of a Creator and moral Governor of the world, soberly and seriously questioned. Trifling objections, however, and petty difficulties, if they recur to our frequent observation, like drops of water, supply by their frequency what they want in actual force, and have a tendency to undermine the solidity of conclusions which have even been once most securely built and firmly rested. The evils of natural and civil life are of this kind; and are sufficiently various and evident to obtrude constantly upon our view. It is for this reason that I have endeavoured to place them in their real light, by pointing out the important operations they effect; and to reduce them to their just size, by showing the mitigations which accompany them; though I am well aware how much

more striking a case might be proposed by a statement of the instances in which the divine benevolence is displayed, than by a review of the exceptions by which it seems to be opposed. That there are such exceptions, is a part of that evil which is blended with the whole system, for reasons thus far discoverable to ourselves, that we see they are connected with the probationary situation of man.

In this respect every thing is consistent. There is much excellence in the world, but no perfection. Human virtue may be carried far, but it can never proceed beyond the reach of danger: and it makes no progress at all, without encountering difficulties and overcoming obstacles which stand on every side in the way of duty. Human happiness, again, has many pure and permanent sources: but a thousand circumstances interfere to prevent its being reckoned upon as certain, or enjoyed as perfect.* Human knowledge, too, is kept within

* "As God has given some certain knowledge, though limited to a few things in comparison; probably as a taste of

very narrow limits by the small number of subjects in which any individual can be profoundly versed, and the comparatively few acquirements which memory can retain. Yet we all instinctively aim at happiness; and the ultimate imperfection of knowledge and virtue has never been considered as excusing us from making that progress in both, of which our faculties admit, and our circumstances allow.

It need not then be thought surprising that the same narrow horizon which limits our view in all our concernments on earth, should confine our prospect when it is directed towards heaven. If we search for the attributes of the Creator by the light which the natural world affords, we see the rays of goodness and justice emerging from his throne, though their lustre what intellectual creatures are capable, to excite in us a desire and endeavour after a better state: as in the greatest part of our concernment, he has afforded us only the twilight of probability here: the sense of this may be a constant admonition to us to spend the days of this our pilgrimage with industry and care, in the search and following of the way which might lead us to a state of greater perfection.”—
Locke on Understanding, b. iv. c. 14.

is partially obscured by clouds and darkness. In proceeding from natural religion to Revelation, we find enough to assure us of its certainty, but too little to satisfy our curiosity: we see but a part of the scheme in which we are included, its final object being enveloped in mystery. But this imperfection, instead of giving birth to sceptical murmurs, may be improved to a beneficial purpose, if it has its intended effect of reminding us, that the state we are now passing through is initiatory, not final; is a trial, a warfare, a pilgrimage; but that we must look upward, to an eternal habitation, for that unclouded light which may be one of the purest rewards of constant and victorious virtue.

THE END.

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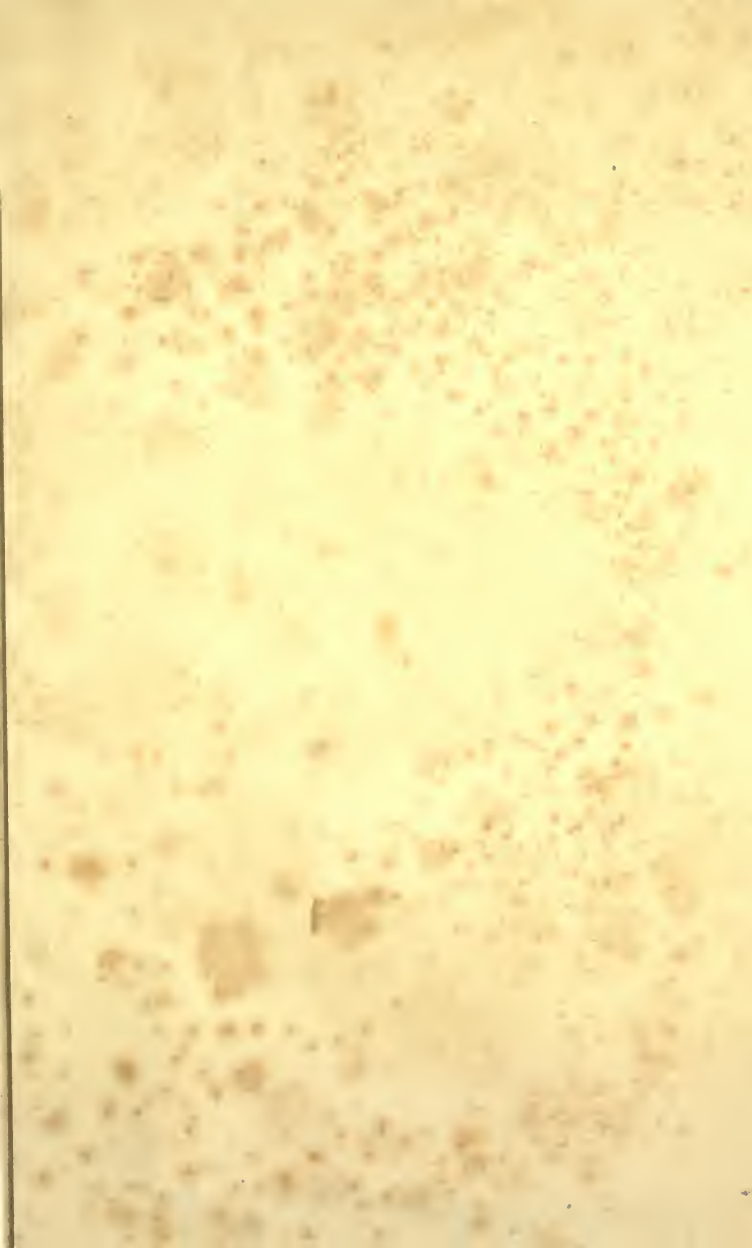
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